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CHAUCER'S ENGLAND.

VOL. II.

CHAUCER'S ENGLAND.

BY

MATTHEW BROWNE.

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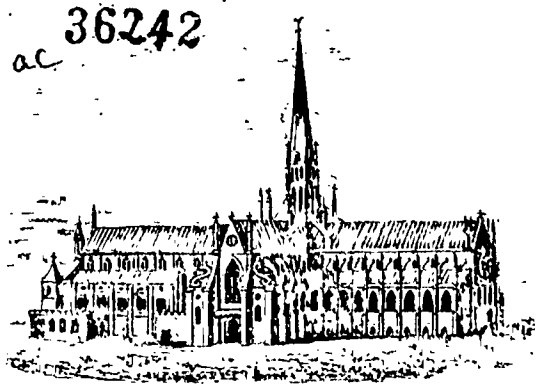

OLD SAINT PAUL'S.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
13 GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.
1869.

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LONDON:
STRANGEWAYS & WALDEN, PRINTERS,
28 Castle St. Leicester Sq.

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CHAPTER X.

FOOD, HOUSE, DRESS, AND MINOR MORALS.

WE will approach the subject of the conveniences and details of life in the days of Chaucer, by opening the Canterbury Tales almost at random.

I. The 'Nonne Preste's Tale' begins by describing the cottage, and manner of life, of a poor widow, who had two daughters, three pigs, three oxen, and a sheep, whose name, though it could be of no earthly consequence, is carefully inserted by Chaucer; some people would say for the sake of the rhyme, but as the termination of the next line was in his own choice,

I venture to think it was in compliance with the child-like usages of olden story:—

'A pore wydow, somdel stope in age,
Was whilom duellyng in a pore cotage,
Bisyde a grove, stondyng in a dale.
This wydowe, of which I telle yow my tale,
Syn thilke day that sche was last a wif,
In paciens ladde a ful symple lyf.
For litel was hir catel and hir rent;
For housbondry of such as God hir sent,
Sche fond hirself, and eek hir doughtres two.
Thre large sowes had sche, and no mo,
Thre kyn, and eek a scheep that highte Malle.'

The account of the diet of these three women is very specific, and includes a reference to the widow's dress, for we are told that her 'cote' was no more 'deynteth' than her food:—

'Ful sooty was hir bour and eek hir halle,
In which sche eet ful many a sclender meel.
Of poynaunt saws hir needid never a deel.
Noon deynteth morsel passid thorugh hir throte;
Hir dyete was accordant to hir cote.
Repleccioun ne made hir never sik;
Attempre dyete was all hir phisik,
And exercise, and hertes suffisaunce.
The goute lette hir nothing for to daunce,
Ne poplexie schente not hir heed.'

We are, almost unnecessarily, told that she drank no

wine, but that she had plenty of milk and brown bread; sometimes an egg or two with bacon :—

> 'No wyn ne drank sche, nother whit ne reed;
> Hir bord was servyd most with whit and blak,
> Milk and broun bred, in which sche fond no lak,
> Saynd bacoun, and som tyme an ey or tweye.'

All this one might have taken for granted, but the lines—

> 'Ful sooty was hir bour and eek hir halle,
> In which sche eet ful many a sclender meel,'

give us some information, as well as the couplet—

> 'A yerd sche had, enclosed al aboute
> With stikkes, and a drye dich withoute.'

For we gather that the widow had only two rooms to her house—an eating-room or hall, and a bower or bedchamber—and that both these rooms were sooty for the want of chimneys to carry off the smoke. We also note that the house had a domain, yard, or little court of its own, which was defended, however feebly, by a dry ditch. In the Miller's Tale we gather that, though the Carpenter (which meant a builder in those days, so many houses being built of wood) was a rich man in his way, the small bedroom or bower was on the ground-floor, for otherwise the action of the story would have been impossible; and that the roof of the hall was the highest part of

the house, because the tubs in which the whole company were to sleep on the night of the predicted flood were to be hung up to the 'balkes' in the roof 'ful hie,' and three ladders were made for the Carpenter,—

> 'To clymben by the ronges and the stalkes
> Unto the tubbes hangyng in the balkes.'

We also find that a stable was attached to the house behind, looking upon the garden, because Nicolas tells the Carpenter that, when the water comes and they are safely floated in their tubs, they may

> '. . . Breke an hole an hye upon the gable
> Into the gardyn-ward over the stable,
> That we may freely passen forth oure way
> Whan that the grete schour is gon away.'

That the Carpenter's 'boure smal' was on the ground-floor is evident, as I have said, from the whole action of the story; but the chamber of Nicolas was evidently upstairs, or at least up steps, for when the Carpenter misses him this is what happens:—

> "Go up," quod he, unto his knave, "anoon;
> Clepe at his dore, or knokke with a stoon;
> Loke how it is, and tell me boldely."
> This knave goth him up ful sturdily,
> And at the chambir dore whil he stood,
> He cryed and knokked as that he were wood.'

But upper storeys, in the modern sense of the word, were so uncommon in the days of Chaucer, that, speak-

ing of a college which tradition says was Clare Hall, the poet, recording the theft of the Miller of 'Trompyngtown, nat fer fro Cantebrigge,' says—

> 'Gret soken hath this Meller, out of doute,
> With whete and malt, of al the lond aboute;
> And namely ther was a gret collegge,
> Men clepe it the Soler-halle of Cantebregge'—

it being, apparently, a sufficient description of the college that it had a 'soler,' or upper storey. It is supposed—though the derivation seems a little too obvious—that the name 'soler' was given to this chamber or upper floor because it was nearest the sun, or, at all events, got more of the daylight. In the first instance, the steps that led to the soler seem to have been raised from the outside; and it is quite possible that the Carpenter's lodger may have lived in such a room, though more probable that it was approached by steps from the inside of the hall or general room. The upper room appears to have been considered the best room in the house, and a guest like Nicolas, who was such a dandy, 'and lik a mayden meke for to se;' always perfumed, 'he was as swete as is the roote of lokorys or eny cetewale,' would be lodged in the best room. It is mentioned that he had a room all to himself, and that it was prettily adorned with sweet herbs:—

> 'A chambir had he in that hostillerye
> Alone, withouten eny compaignye,
> Ful fetisly i-dight with herbes soote.'

We are told that he had 'shelves couched at his beddes heede,' and that his box or press was covered with a 'faldyng red,' so that he seems to have been a person of some consequence in those days. But, to return to the widow and her two daughters in the 'Nonne Preste's Tale,'—we are not at liberty to suppose that her house had glass windows. In the poorer sort of houses a window was a mere shutter turning on hinges, or perhaps a mere hole which was latticed and curtained. But I do not know why horn should not have been applied, in windows, when it was used in lanterns. The table in a house like this of the widow might have been, as the table frequently was in those days, a mere board or plank put upon tressels. This could be put away when the meal was over, which must have been a matter of some consequence, when the rooms were so few, and economy of space was so important. The widow and her daughters perhaps covered themselves with their ordinary clothes at night, sleeping unclad and without anything that we should recognise as sheet or blanket. That people always took off the whole of their ordinary clothing, and without supplying its place by a night-dress, before they went to bed, is not perhaps exact (as I have hinted in another chapter); but that was the prevailing practice, and, certainly, with people like this widow. That she and her two daughters slept in one room need not surprise us, whatever we may think of calling such a room a bower, for in the 'Reeve's Tale' we find the miller and his wife

in one bed, his daughter in another, and the two clerks in a third bed, all in the same room. We are told that the miller made his guests a bed 'with schetys and with chalouns fair i-spred;' though this is apologized for on the ground that there was no other lodging to be had: —

'Ther was no rommer herberw in the place.'

As I think we are apt rather to underrate the comfort in which our ancestors used to live, I may add that it does not seem very improbable to myself that a person like this widow should have sheets or coverlets, though Mr. Thorold Rogers, in describing the Manor House of the period between 1259 and 1400, says (Vol. I. p. 13):— 'The dormitory contained a rude bed, and but rarely sheets or blankets, for the gown of the day was generally the coverlet of the night.'

Mr. Rogers describes the Manor House at this period as containing at least three principal rooms; the hall, the dormitory, and the solar, the solar being the state chamber or drawing-room. The furniture he describes in terms such as one's imagination could for the most part supply:—'A table put on tressels and laid aside when out of use, a few forms and stools or a long bench stuffed with straw or wool, covered with a straw cushion worked like a beehive, with one or two chairs of wood or straw, and a chest or two for linen, formed the whole furniture. A brass pot or two for boiling, and two or three brass dishes; a few wooden platters

and trenchers, or more rarely of pewter; an iron or latten candlestick; a kitchen knife or two; a box or barrel for salt; and a brass ewer and basin, formed the moveables of an ordinary house. The walls were garnished with mattocks, scythes, reaping-hooks, buckets, corn-measures, and empty sacks.' This, I repeat, is the furniture of a Manor House, and it will not be imagined that the poor widow had anything like such a quantity of chattels, though she must have had tubs and pans, because she was, as Chaucer says, 'in a manere deye,' that is, a dairy-keeper; unless the passage means that she was the dairy woman to the Manor House, and in that way came to get an egg or two now and then. But one thing she, no doubt, had in her house, namely, rude shelves or perhaps 'perches.' The perch was a frame let into the wall, and clothes, armour (when there was any), and domestic utensils that would hang, were hung upon it; but I suppose the article received its name from its being, first of all, appropriated to the use of falcons and other pet birds in houses of high class. Pegs, and what we call clothes, horses, were an obvious expedient; but, considering the length of time it appears to have taken the human race to invent a chimney, it is not safe to speculate about such matters. A hole in the roof to permit the escape of smoke, or a flue going a little way up the wall, and then letting the smoke out by a sidelong aperture (such as might be seen at Rochester Castle and elsewhere) is one thing; but the chimney proper is another, though

apparently one of the most obvious things in the world. Hallam, who is disposed to after-date the introduction of domestic improvements, says, and apparently with authority, that chimneys were unknown in country cottages in England in the early part of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and that in some parts of the country they were of still later introduction; for instance, in Cheshire, where 'the fire was in the midst of the house or against a hob of clay, while the oxen lived under the same roof.'

It is likely that when Chaucer says this old widow was 'in a manere deye,' he does mean that she was the dairy woman of the Manor House; for Mr. Thorold Rogers seems to have discovered, from the farming accounts of the time, that none of the farm-servants were maintained in the house except occasionally during the harvest. Most likely her little stock of pigs, cows, and sheep, were allowed the run of the fields of the Manor, and perhaps a little 'drasch' (trash?) for the pigs. *Apropos* of the sheep, it must be borne in mind that in the fourteenth century, and much later, people protected themselves from the cold in their draughty houses as well as they could by the use of furs. Among these, sheep-skins would have been the cheapest and most accessible in country districts. The modern Londoner, who is accustomed to think of hare-skins and rabbit-skins as exceedingly cheap, will be surprised to hear that rabbit-skins in the fourteenth century were excessively dear, because rabbits themselves were

apparently scarce; a fact which is verified by an item which I shall quote in another chapter, from the *Liber Albus,* though no one seems able to account for it.

'As it draws to a close the 'Nonne Preste's Tale contains a village picture, which is one of the most animated in Chaucer. It illustrates, once more, the excessive noisiness of people in those old times, and the delight they took in what they innocently called '*minstrelsy.' To whom the hive of bees belonged does not appear, but bees were very commonly kept in those days, and the widow very likely had honey to her brown bread now and then. The reader will see from what follows that the fox has run away, with the cock on his back, to the wood, and that the hue and cry is set up after the thief:—

'The sely wydow, and hir doughtres tuo,
Herden these hennys crie and maken wo,
And out at dores starte they anoon,
And sayden the fox toward the woode is goon,
And bar upon his bak the cok away;
They criden, "out! harrow and wayleway!
Ha, ha, the fox!" and after him thay ran,
And eek with staves many another man;
Ran Colle our dogge, and Talbot, and Garlond,
And Malkyn, with a distaf in hir hond;
Ran cow and calf, and eek the verray hogges,
So were they fered for berkyng of dogges,
And schowtyng of the men and wymmen eke.
Thay ronne that thay thought her herte breke.
They yelleden as feendes doon in helle;

The dokes criden as men wold hem quelle; [*ducks; kill*]
The gees for fere flowen over the trees;
Out of the hyve came the swarm of bees,
So hidous was the noyse, *a benedicite!*
Certes he Jakke Straw, ane his meyné,
Ne maden schoutes never halfe so schrille,
Whan than they wolden eny Flemyng kille,
As thilke day was maad upon the fox.
Of bras thay broughten hornes and of box,
Of horn and boon, in which thay blew and powped,
And therewithal thay schryked and thay howped;
It semed as that heven schulde falle.'

I think I remember that the blowing of a horn was in strictness necessary for the raising of the 'hue and cry' in the England of the middle ages. The word 'sely' (german *selig*) means something between silly and blessed, *q. d.* 'precious.' 'This precious widow.'

II. A very curious passage, in the Parson's Tale, about Dress, is unquotable, so that we shall not be so fortunate in approaching the subject of apparel. It is one of the most striking features of the Middle Ages (if we may trust a certain kind of criticism), both in England and on the Continent, that the horrible visitations of the Black Death were followed by outbreaks of fantastic luxuriance in dress. That in England there was plenty of absurdity and extravagance in the dresses of both men and women before the advent of the pestilence in August 1348, is sufficiently clear from the denunciations of the clergy, who seem to have told the people that the plague was sent to punish

them for excesses in attire, joined with what was supposed to be immodesty—for instance, the wearing of a short tunic by a man. It is difficult to see what connexion there could possibly be between any impression left by a great plague and the tendency to invent or follow strange fashions, and thus, as a matter of fact, we find the strange fashions complained of before the plague as well as after. It was in some German author, a clerical writer whose name has escaped me, that I read the statement that mediæval pestilences of Europe were always followed by curious extravagance in attire; and it is possible, if not probable, that this was merely the old story of Tenterden Steeple and Goodwin Sands; but, if there is anything in it, the extravagance in dress would merely be part of a general reaction toward luxury and splendour after a time of depression, neglect of appearances, and necessarily some degree of squalor—for of course in those days the domestic resources and small conveniences of humanity were not upon such a scale that they would easily rally after a destructive siege from misery, poverty, and pain. The difficulty of estimating the moral bearings of the subject is increased by the fact that dress in those days was, what it is not now, a livery. In every class of society, from the highest to the lowest, the clothing worn served for a badge of rank as well as for the usual purposes of dress. The sumptuary laws of the Parliaments recognised this as well as the doleful homilies of the friars and the alarmists, who amusingly attribute

the impoverishment of the realm to the extravagant expenditure in dress, instead of to its true cause, the drain occasioned by those wars of King Edward III., out of which this country got nothing useful but glory and a splendid tradition. There can be no doubt, I think, that the alleged extravagance in dress was one of the manifestations of the insurgent spirit of the times, and a symptom of the tendency to break down class distinctions. We see the same thing in our own times, and it is idle to complain of it in so far as it belongs to the new social insurgence. If a lady dresses foolishly, and a servant copies her, it is useless to discuss the question, which is the more silly, the mistress or the maid; the impulse, which leads a person of inferior station and culture to dress like his betters, is in itself an impulse of crude self-respect, and any great activity of the tendency belongs naturally to periods of political change. In the time of Chaucer, as now, a well-dressed churl was betrayed the moment he opened his lips; but the insurgent tendency, having shown itself first on the outsides of things, does not stop there, and a person who dresses well, or even gaudily, because he wishes not to be distinguished from the cultivated classes by any visible sign, is on the way to get the cultivation too; for his self-respect must inevitably be made sensitive on that side also, in a little time.

We are, however, assured by the chroniclers writing of the time immediately preceding the Black Death of

1348, that 'in this tyme englisshe men so myche haunted and cleved to y^e^ woodness and foly of y^e^ straungers, y^t^ yey ordeyned and chaunged hem every yeer diverse shappes and dȩsgisynges of clothyng.' They wore their tunics too short or too long, and sometimes 'pleated' over the arms like women's gowns. The men wore caps effeminately small, and buttoned under the chin in the feminine manner, these being ornamented at the top with bands that shone with jewels, and gold or silver—or imitations of them we may presume. It greatly angers the moralists that 'secular' people should wear silken paltocks, and drawers fasted with braces! They are angry, too, with the costly belts worn by adventurers who had no money in their pockets, and by soldiers with no courage in their hearts. All this criticism had a foundation in fact. Nothing can be more preposterous than the appearance presented by some of the figures which artists like Mr. Fairholt have made familiar to all—women with horns on their head-dresses, two feet high, from which hang the veils, and men with shoes cut and slashed into what Chaucer, copying the talk of his day, calls Paul's windows, and, turning up at the toes in an obstructive curve, like a pig's tail or a mandarin's finger nail. But all this absurdity was not very unnatural in a time of pageant and privilege—so many things were denied to those who were not 'the great lords of the land'—for instance, walking with a dog in the streets, or being out at certain hours—that we cannot be surprised that

unprivileged persons endeavoured to indemnify themselves by a factitious splendour of appearance; and we need pay *no more* attention to the denunciations of the clergy in such matters than we now do to the prosings of an old-fashioned rector whom we hear lecturing Betsy, at her mistress's request, because she will curl her hair and wear satin on Sundays, or Dick the apprentice, at his master's request, because the lad will wear a gold chain.

In 1363, however, an Act of Parliament was passed, namely, 37 Edward III. cap. 8, the object of which was to put down 'the outrageous and excessive apparel of divers people against their estate and degree, to the great destruction and impoverishment of all the land.' It would be impertinent to quote the whole of this Act of Parliament, but among other provisions, 'it is ordained that grooms, as well servants of lords as they of mysteries and artificers, shall have clothes for their vesture or hosing whereof the whole cloth shall not exceed two marks, and that they wear no cloth of higher price, of their buying nor otherwise, nor nothing of gold nor of silver embroidered, enameled, nor of silk, nor nothing pertaining to the said things; and their wives, daughters and children of the same condition in their clothing and apparel, and they shall wear no veil, nor kerchief, passing twelve pence a veil.' Yeomen and handy-craftsmen are limited to forty shillings for the cloth they wear, and they must not wear jewels, 'nor cloth of silk, nor of silver, nor girdle, knife harnessed, ring, garter,

nor owche, riband, chains, nor such other things of gold nor of silver.' These restrictions are extended to the wives and daughters of yeomen and handicraftsmen, who are only to wear yarn made within the realm. 'They are not to wear any manner of fur, nor of budge, but only lamb, coney, cat, and fox.' Then there are various restrictions placed upon other classes of the king's subjects, knights, merchants, esquires, and clerks, forbidding some of them, for instance, to exhibit 'any turning-up or purfle,'—there appears to have been a particular objection to the 'turning up of ermine and lettuce.' The regulations for farm-servants, carriers, and 'all other people who have not forty shillings of goods,' are truly amusing. They are only to wear 'blanket and russet of twelve pence,' with linen girdles, 'according to their estate.' Here we have the livery idea peeping out. The poor fellows were not even allowed to dress smartly for dinner, for they are expressly told to 'come to eat and drink in the manner as pertaineth to them;' and, incredible as it may appear, this Act of Parliament condescends upon their appetites, for it is added—'and not excessively.' The forfeiture of the apparel, or that portion of the apparel which contravened the sumptuary law, was a favourite form of penalty, and in some cases the forfeited article was the perquisite of the officer who did 'justice.' In the City, for instance, women whose proper place was over in Southwark,—who were refused the offices of the Church while living, and who, if they died unreconciled to the Church, were

buried in the Single Women's ground, were not allowed to wear minever. If they did, the beadle might take possession of it,—for sale, of course, as neither he nor his domestic retinue would be allowed to wear it. Whether this Act was immediately repealed, or not, (and the balance of evidence is in favour of the idea that it was not repealed till the reign of Henry VIII.), it is, if we think of it, a profoundly significant example of the faith in law which the law-makers then had, and the importance attached to social classification. In some of the clauses of the Act, particular people are allowed to wear the habits of a higher caste than their own, *if they have a certain amount of income;* which again, is very English. One of these provisions particularly caught my eye. It is to the effect that merchants and others, down to people of handicraft, might, if they had property worth five hundred pounds, dress like esquires. I well remember, as a child, being told by an ignorant peasant woman, when I asked the meaning of the 'esquire' on a letter, that esquire 'meant quality folks,' but that anybody with five hundred pounds ought to be called an esquire.

When we have laughed at some of the absurdities of dress in the time of Chaucer, we must admit that one of their customary articles of attire, namely, the hood or head-dress, such as we see in the portrait of Chaucer himself, was an admirable thing. It may be puzzling to understand why men of mark in the eighteenth century were so often painted in night-caps, but

the value of the hood in the fourteenth century is obvious—it shielded the head both from heat and cold, though it had the great inconvenience of not admitting air to the scalp. One does not require a hood indoors in days when windows are air-tight, but for use in the street, a head-dress which sheltered the neck and ears would, even in modern days, prevent much illness.

III. Before closing this chapter which (as has been hinted), merely gathers, in a desultory way, round suggestions in Chaucer a few details of the English life of his time, we may return more specifically for a moment to one or two of the topics touched upon. First, as to sleeping naked.

One need not go beyond the pages of Chaucer himself to gather an impression that in bed Englishmen in the middle ages, even Englishmen of good position, like Chaucer who was connected with the royal family, slept with no covering but that of the bedclothes. Several times in the course of his poems does he describe himself as naked in bed. 'As naked in my bed I lay.' If Chaucer were less accurate in his descriptions we might hesitate to infer from such perhaps that the word 'naked' was to be taken in its strongest sense—it might possibly be used laxly, as we sometimes use it ourselves. But does not Chaucer's habitual exactitude of detail take away our liberty to read him vaguely? How common the practice of wearing night-dresses was in the time of Milton, three

hundred years later, I do not know; but a passage in *Paradise Lost* almost inevitably suggests to the mind that the idea of sleeping naked was familiar to his mind. In describing the withdrawal of Adam and Eve to their bower he simply uses the words:—

> '. . . . . And eased the putting off
> These troublesome disguises which we wear.'

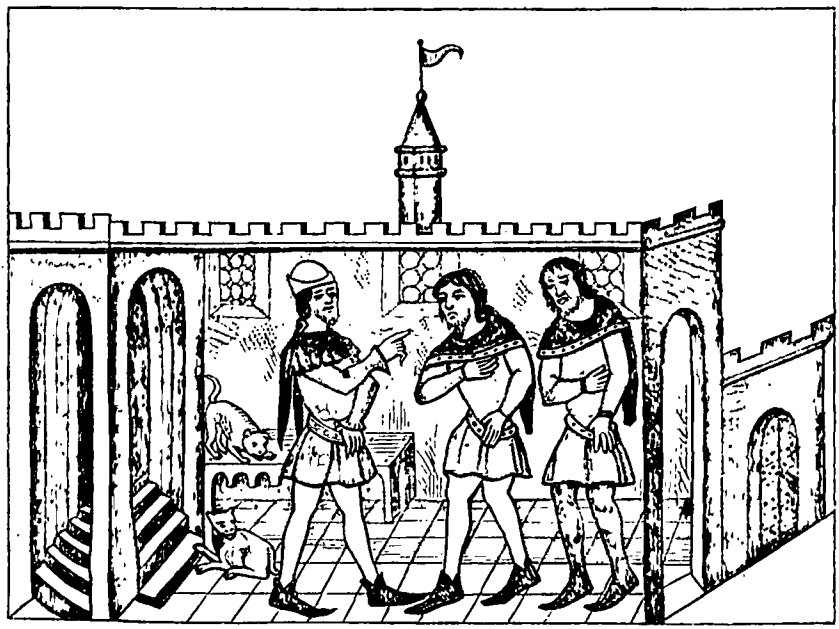
It will be observed that unless the thought most familiar to the poet's mind was that of *sleeping* without 'disguise,' the contrast is here incomplete. I do not wish, however, to found anything positive on this observation. Mr. Riley, in his excellent introduction to the *Liber Albus*, has called attention to a passage in Letter Book G, which explains that a passenger arriving at St. Botolph's wharf with luggage strictly personal should be allowed to land it free of wharfage; the original, it seems, specifying that the wallet or bag must however contain only articles 'a doos et a lyt'—that is, for back and bed. This, I may observe, exactly corresponds with the regulation of the Spanish Customs as to what they call *ropa usada*. But the important point is that Mr. Riley thinks the words 'a lyt' go far towards proving that night-gowns or night-shirts were in use in those days, and that it was not by any means *universally* the fashion in the middle ages, as antiquarians have asserted, to tumble into bed in a state of nudity. 'The expression,' Mr. Riley thinks, 'can hardly be construed to mean that the passenger carried his sheets in

the mall or wallet under his arm.' No doubt, however, it may be said, on the other hand, that the distinction between 'back' and 'bed' points the other way. A night-dress would be for both back and bed, and the phrase 'a lyt' would include it; so that it may be said the expression 'for back' refers to a change of wearing apparel, and for 'bed' to some sort of coverlet. Or, again, the expression for 'back and bed' may merely point to the fact that a person might cover himself at night with his ordinary wearing apparel, by way of sheets and blankets; for instance, the linen under-garment might be put next the body, and a coat lined with fur over the linen garment by way of blanket and counterpane.

Again, as to chimneys. I have already said that a very late date has sometimes been assigned to the use of chimneys in England; but, though they were not in use in Chaucer's time by persons like the 'pore widow' in the 'Nonne Preste's Tale,' they were common in cities and towns. In the *Liber Albus* there are express directions for building them, and in Troilus and Creysede we find a reference which makes it plain that the chimney-*piece* played much the same part in a room in Chaucer's time as it does now. The passage is quoted elsewhere in this volume.

As for glass, the use of that, also, when we come down to as late as the fourteenth century, seems to have been underrated. In Chaucer's time, glaziers was a distinct craft or mystery, recognised in the city of

London. Of the ordinary quality of the kind of glass most familiar in the days of Edward III., we perhaps obtain a glimpse in the phrase, familiar to us in Chaucer,—'her eyen grey as glas.'



CHAPTER XI.

FOOD, HOUSE, DRESS, AND MINOR MORALS (*continued.*)

IT would be trite to observe that, as man is the only animal that cooks his food, the Cook is a figure that comes naturally into any picture of human society; but the Manciple, though the word is still known in colleges and inns of court, is not so well known a person. Chaucer's Manciple, with more than thirty masters, for

whom he has to cater in the way of buying their food, is so clever a buyer, that, whether he purchases on trust or for ready money, he 'sets all the caps' of his superiors, *i. e.* he is in advance of their household needs, and, in fact, outwits them. In the Middle Ages, such a person must have been of immense importance, because marketing had its uncertainties, and the law meddled with everything. There were assayers of bread and conners of ale, and the market prices of the commonest articles of food were fixed by law. Add to this, that sumptuary laws limited the number and interfered with the kind of dishes to be set on the board; and we can well imagine that the Manciple and the Cook had need to be clever men. Of course, the sumptuary laws were evaded; but it was necessary, or at least decent, in breaking these commandments, to obey the well-known eleventh, which says, 'Thou shalt not be found out:' —

'A gentil Maunciple was ther of a temple,
Of which achatours mighten take exemple
For to be wys in beyyng of vitaille.
For whethur that he payde, or took by taille,
Algate he wayted so in his acate,
That he was ay biforn and in good state.
Now is not that of God a ful fair grace,
That such a lewed mannes wit schal pace
The wisdom of an heep of lernede men?
Of maystres hadhe moo than thries ten,
That were of lawe expert and curious;
Of which ther were a doseyn in an hous,

Worthi to be stiwardes of rente and lond
Of any lord that is in Engelond,
To make him lyve by his propre good,
In honour detteles, but he were wood,
Or lyve as scarsly as he can desire;
And able for to helpen al a schire
In many caas that mighte falle or happe;
And yit this maunciple sette aller cappe.'

London ale had probably some special character for strength or quality. The Miller slily attributes the crudeness of his phrases to the 'ale of Southwark;' but the city and the borough were jealous of each other in such matters, and a Cook might possibly be expected to know London from Southwark liquor by the taste at once. It may be noted, in passing, that 'chickens' was good English in Chaucer's time, though we are sometimes told 'chicken' is the plural of 'chick:'—

'A Cook thei hadde with hem for the nones,
To boyle chyknes and the mary bones,
And poudre marchant, tart, and galyngale.
Wel cowde he knowe a draught of Londone ale.
He cowde roste, sethe, broille, and frie,
Make mortreux, and wel bake a pye.
But gret harm was it, as it semede me,
That on his schyne a mormal hadde he;
For blankmanger he made with the beste.'

That this Cook had an unsightly excrescence on his 'schyne' was certainly a drawback; and, as the subject is not carried any further, and there seems no earthly intrinsic reason for introducing it, it may be placed to

the account of the many minute touches which go to make it probable that in every case Chaucer was painting from the life. For my part, I think his exactness is pushed too far. Who cares to know that the Wife of Bath had unsightly teeth; or the Miller a bristly wen? If the parties had been consulted, they would probably have said something like what Dr. Johnson said when his portrait was in question. He insisted that Reynolds should not be too realistic in his treatment: 'He may paint himself as deaf as he pleases,' but I will not be handed down to posterity as blinking Sam.'

II. One of the incidents of a life of uncertainty and adventure would necessarily be a deepening of the sense of dependence and that nearness to nature and the earth, of which something has been said elsewhere. Conceive a state of things in which lords and ladies lived so much from hand to mouth that the mistress of the house sticking her knife into the table was the token that there was nothing to eat, upon which the whole male establishment turn out for the hunt,—their next meal depending entirely upon their success in the chase! Eating and drinking would have some of the uncertainty of the winds and waves: it would be every way serious, and might even come to be a superstitious business. But to draw closer to the time of which we are writing,—a time of markets, and comparative civic plenty and convenience,—it is obvious, upon the surface of the art and literature of the Middle Ages, that

the same distinction in contrast with modern manners runs through their eating and drinking as through other portions of the economy of daily life,—that is to say, though there was infinitely less convenience, comfort, and refinement, there was infinitely more pomp and ceremony. Eating in company was then, as it is now, a sign of fellow-feeling, and a seal of acquaintanceship; it is and ever was so all over the world, the fact belongs to the *science des origines*. But dining was more of a solemnity than it is now. The king of Siam, or some such person, has a trumpet blown when he is about to dine, to inform the rest of the world that his majesty *is* about to dine; and, when he has finished, another trumpet is blown, to inform mankind in general that they may now get *their* dinners. Our forefathers did not exactly do this, but their state dinners were, like the modern melodrama, accompanied by music. When the king drank to Hamlet, the kettle-drums were, told to strike up; and it seems to have been one of the most prevalent feelings of Europe in the Middle Ages, that everything at all serious ought to be made a noise about. Hence, in the literature and pictures of the period, we find not only that dinner was often an affair of procession and display in the presence of the guests, the dinner-master or steward heading a march of kitchen-boys, he with his wand or baton, and they with the precious dishes proudly flaunted behind him; but fiddlers, trumpeters, and drummers assist at the ceremony, blowing, thumping, and scraping, to add to the

excitement, and glorify the wonderful circumstance that a dozen or so of very common-place people are going to eat porpoise, or peacock, or some other such delicacy. All this, with much more of the same kind, belongs naturally to an age of splendour and show, when tapestry was hung upon bare walls to keep out draughts, and shoes, with 'Poule's windows' in them, were set upon rush-covered floors beneath the table; but it also belongs to ages in which the division of labour, and the multiplication of resources, had not made the getting and the preparing of a dinner such a matter of course as it is in our own days. It may at first seem far fetched that any feeling of uncertainty added to the zest and the solemnity of dining; but after all, it must be remembered that in those days any king, queen, lord, or lady might certainly have to eat *prisoner's* food. The frequency with which people found themselves in prison in the Middle Ages, is plainly marked in its literature by the frequent use of the word prison and its cognates by way of figure of speech. A trace of it remains in the litany of the Church of England:—'That it may please Thee to show thy pity upon all prisoners and captives.' Dining well and in freedom, and especially dining with one's invited friends, was an incident of enlargement and good fortune in those days, instead of being a thing of routine, as in ours, and might not so unnaturally be signalized by the blowing of trumpets as well as sanctified by the sprinkling rod of the holy-water clerk.

III. But whatever splendour reigned in the hall, and however different the etiquette of dinner was in those days from what it is in ours, there is scarcely so much difference when we come to the kitchen. I do not know how it strikes others, but I have myself always been struck with the fact that kitchen utensils in general seem of high antiquity. Polish the kettles and saucepans as much as you please, I never happen to go into a kitchen without feeling that everything about me is old. Of course, the needs and uses which suggest kitchen utensils are simple and permanent, and it is my own decided opinion that some of the now discarded devices of old-world cookery were founded in nature, and far better in result than any devices that have superseded them. Some articles of kitchen furniture do look so *very* old! Take a salt-box for example, there might be many ways of keeping salt,—in a bunged or covered jar for instance; but the salt-box looks as old as Jack the Giant-killer. We feel at once that it is a tradition. The same again of a kneading trough. I say nothing of a three-legged stool, because that has been a seat for kings; but I should certainly expect to find that the kitchen furniture of the middle ages was so very like the furniture of the nineteenth century, that if any 'neat-handed Phillis,' now living, were suddenly dropped down in a mediæval kitchen, she would know how to make the 'savoury messes' as well as any maiden under the Phillippa Panetaria, whom Chaucer perhaps married out of Prince Lionel's house-

hold. And the fact bears out the fancy. Mr. Wright quotes from Alexander Neckam, who wrote towards the end of the twelfth century, a list of kitchen utensils; another list belonging to the thirteenth century, which gives a similar enumeration; and he immediately adds that a 'comparison of the vocabularies of the fifteenth century shows that the arrangements of the kitchen had undergone little change during the intervening period.' The catalogue of the twelfth century includes, besides pots, pot-hook, chaldron, frying-pan, and gridiron, a pestle and mortar, a table for chopping and mincing herbs and vegetables, handmills for grinding pepper, &c., and an instrument for crumbling bread. No good workwoman would quarrel with these tools, if she had to prepare a meal with them.

IV. As to plates and dishes and ceremony at table,—in our own day, to eat off the same plate, and drink out of the same cup, is a figure of speech, even when used by Silas Marner; and to eat at the same board is a phrase quite as often used as the other. In Chaucer's time, however, there was no figure of speech in the case. Guests were paired and ate, every pair, out of the same plate or off the same trencher. This must have made the placing of guests at table a matter of very nice arrangement. In the romance of *Launcelot du Lac*, a lady complains to her husband that she has not eaten off the same dish with a knight for several

years. Hallam quotes, from the romance of *Perceforest*, part of an account of a feast, at which eight hundred knights had each of them a lady eating off his plate! 'Y eut huit cens chevaliers seant à table; et çi n'y eust celui qui n'eust une dame ou une pucelle à son ecuelle.' What a picture!

In the 'Coke's Tale of Gamelyn' we have a trace of that practice of washing the hands before and after a meal, which was so necessary in an age when forks were not a necessary part of the apparel of the table:—

> 'Gamelyn,' seyde Adam, 'it schal not be so,
> I can teche the a reed that is worth the two.
> I wot wel for sothe that this is no nay,
> We schul have a mangery [a feast; an eating] right on Sonday:
> Abbotes and priours many heer schal be,
> And other men of holy chirche, as I tele the;
> Thow schalt stonde up by the post as thou were hond-fast,
> And I schal leve hem unloke, awey thou may hem cast,
> *Whan that they have eten and waisschen here hondes,*
> Thou schalt biseke hem alle to bryng the out of bondes.'

In the same poem we have the word 'spence' in the sense of a store-room—suggesting at once the origin of the surname Spencer:

> 'Adam took Gamelyn, as stille as ony stoon,
> And ladde him into spence rapely and anon,
> And sette him to soper right in a prive stede.'

This was done, indeed, by Adam, in right of his office:

'Gamelyn stood bounden stille as eny stoon;
Two dayes and two nightes *mete had he noon.*
Thanne seyde Gamelyn, that stood y-bounde stronge,
"*Adam spenser*, me thinkth I faste to longe;
Adam spenser, now I bysech the,
For the mochel love my fader loved the,
Yf thou may come to the keyes, lese me out of bond,
And I wil parte with the of my free lond."
Thanne seyde Adam, that was the spencer,
"I have serued thy brother this sixtene yeer,"'—

and so on.

In the 'Shipman's Tale,' the monk says that by his calendar it is 'prime,' which may be taken to mean nine o'clock, and he asks that dinner may be served as soon as possible:—

'Let us dyne as sone as ye may,
For by my chilindre it is prime of day.'

And there are other reasons for believing that in the time of Chaucer, from nine to ten o'clock was the dinner hour. In this respect, of course, the nominal or superficial difference between the fourteenth century and the nineteenth is great indeed. The ease with which artificial light is produced, and applied for domestic purposes, has a natural effect in prolonging the "hours" for which people sit up; and then they rise from bed later: so that all the occupations of the day are thrown farther backward, or forward, towards the coming night. The modern dinner is a meal of culture as well as of state, and could scarcely be taken in the

middle of a busy day. But in spite of all the superficial differences, the substantial resemblances of human habit force themselves upon one's notice in the fourteenth century, just as they do in any other. We do not, indeed, have to lay the tables, and set forth "water and towelle" for the guests in our own day, nor do the trumpets blow to summon them to the lavatories or the basins. But we have bowls of odorous water and finger napkins—*though*, we have the forks, which in Chaucer's time were wanting to the apparatus of a meal. One kindly custom, indeed, we have not retained,—namely, the dedication of a loaf to God or charity at the beginning of a meal.

It is not considered necessary in a modern book of etiquette, as it was in the 'Boke of Curtasye,' to admonished the well-behaved guest not to play with 'cat or dogge' while at dinner:—

> 'The aumonere by this hathe sayde grace,
> And the almes-dysshe hase sett in place;
> Therin the karver a lofe schalle sette,
> To serve God fyrst withouten lette;
> These othere lofes he parys aboute,
> Lays hit myd (with) dysshe withouten doute.'

Cats, at all events, are never seen, except by misadventure, in a dining-room; dogs but seldom: and the dogs do not come in for their meals even when their presence is permitted. The remark I have made elsewhere about our being further removed from nature by

our habits and necessities than our ancestors were, might apply very well to our relations with the inferior animals. I do not see that there is anything funny in the direction given in the 'Boke of Curtasye' to keep the nails clean:—

> 'Loke thy naylys ben clene in blythe,
> Lest thy felaghe lothe therwyth.'

A similar direction may be found in many a modern manual of etiquette; and boys and girls yet find in some spelling-books a caution not very unlike this:—

> 'If thou spit on the borde or elles opone,
> Thou shalle be holden an uncurtayse mon.'

But this is obsolete:—

> 'If thy nose thou clense, as may befalle,
> Loke thy honde thou clense withalle,
> Prively with skyrt do hit away
> Or ellis thurgh thi tipet that is so gay,'

for the simple reason that pocket-handkerchiefs are now in use.

It is difficult to overrate the amount of the difference in cleanliness, not to say elegance, of habit, which must have been caused in later centuries by the more frequent use of cotton, linen, and other fabrics readily available for purposes of immediate cleanliness. In the preface to his work on 'Prices,' vol. ii., referring to the period between the year 1259 and the year 1400,

Mr. J. Thorold Rogers, speaking of the accounts which he had examined for the purposes of his laborious book, has the following remarks:—'The accounts are generally written on parchment, and a very few on vellum. Up to the beginning of the fourteenth century the use of these materials was universal, and, as far as I have seen, no paper is employed before this period. There is a book in the Public Record Office, written in the reign of Edward II. (1307—1327) containing the accounts of the customs paid to Bordeaux, the material of which is a thick paper, made of cotton. Perhaps paper was employed in Italy before the time of the Bordeaux register, as cotton grew in the southern part of Europe at a very remote time, and the art of paper-making from this fibre may have been practised at a very early date.'

I interrupt Mr. Rogers, for a moment, merely to observe that there is no doubt of this having been so in Italy. At all events I read this in a foot-note to Cary's Dante:—'Tiraboschi has proved that paper made of linen came into use towards the latter half of the fourteenth century, and that the inventor of it was Pier da Fabiano, who carried on his manufactory in the city of Trevigi; whereas paper of cotton, with, perhaps, some linen mixed, was used during the twelfth century. *Stor. della Lett. Ital.* tom. v. lib. i. cap. iv. sect. 4.' Mr. Rogers proceeds:—

'The earliest English specimen of paper made from linen rags which I have ever seen is a small piece

containing an account of the spices contained in the Merton College larder in the year 1357. The fabric is very coarse and rude; large fragments of the original linen being still visible in the substance of the paper, and the texture is very loose. Shortly after this date, however, excellent paper, wired and water-marked, may be found. But the ancient fragment alluded to above is perhaps the earliest existing specimen of the art which has been the means of such benefits to mankind. After the use of paper became general the quality of the parchment is greatly deteriorated.'

V. After this little digression from the use of linen and cotton fabrics as adjuncts to cleanliness or delicacy or neatness of living, let us return for a moment to the subject of manners.

One of the most curious and instructive records of the minor morals of the Middle Ages is 'The Book of Nurture, folowyng Englandis Gise' (the guise or manner of England) 'by me Iohn Russell, sum tyme servande with Duke Vmfrey of Gloucester, a prynce fulle royalle, with whom Vschere (usher) and chambur was Y, and marshalle also in Halle." This 'boke,' edited, and, I suppose (from the first sentence in the preface) I may say, discovered by Mr. F. J. Furnivall, who has done his work with a hearty, manly humour, that is as much above my praise as his antiquarian knowledge is above my own, will furnish us with a great many illustrative passages. The date of the

poem is a little later than that of Chaucer's death, but the time is quite near enough, just as that Duke of Gloucester who was the patron of Lydgate and Occleve is quite within the purvue of this book.

The poem opens with an invocation, 'In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!' John Russell then informs us that it is delight to teach the inexperienced of his own craft:—

'To teche vertewe and connynge me thynketh hit charitable.'

The work then proceeds, in the old-fashioned manner, with a fable. Russell rises out of his bed 'in the merry season of May, to sport in a forest, where sights were fresh and gay.' Here we perceive that we are not yet out of the those conventional 'May' and 'woodland' appendages to story: it comes quite natural to Russell to go about to teach his 'connynge' in May, of all months, and in the green wood, of all places. He asks leave of the forester to walk where the deer are, and there he encounters a young man with a bow and arrow, who is about to have a shot. The young man is 'semely,' or, as a modern reporter would say, of prepossessing appearance; but he is in bad condition, 'sklendur and leene.' This appears to be because he is out of place. Russell bids him not to give way to gloomy thoughts. He replies that he is so ignorant of the duties of a serving-man that nobody of any consequence will take him. Will you learn, if I teach you? says the poet. Yes, says

the 'slender' young man, with joy, and 'shuld pray for your sowle nevyr to come in payne.' 'Well,' returns the poet, 'would you like to be a servant, a ploughman, a labourer, a courtier, a clerk, a merchant, a mason, an artificer, a chamberlain, a butler, a panter (pantry-man), or a carver?' The young man replies that he desires above all mortal things to possess the cunning of a butler, panter, or chamberlain, and 'specially' that of a carver.

Then, continues the poet, if you will love God, and desire what is right, and be true to your master when you get one, I will teach you all this cunning. The passionate desire of this youth to become a 'serving-man,' is amusing enough to a modern mind; but that breed appears to have had a gay time of it in the middle ages. Nobody can forget the description in 'King Lear,' which Edgar gives of his opportunities of enjoying himself. Lear asks, "'What hast thou been?' And he says, 'A serving-man, proud in heart and mind; that curled my hair; wore gloves in my cap . . . swore as many oaths as I spake words . . . wine loved I deeply, dice dearly; and in woman out-paramoured the Turk.' Russell evidently knew the facilities for self-indulgence that beset the serving-man, for he makes his pupil promise to love God and be virtuous; and, there and then, in the forest, the tutor sets to work to disclose his cunning.

He begins with the tools of the craft, the bread, the salt, and so on. The 'sovereign' or master is to

be served with new bread; others with one day old bread; the household in general with two day old; and mere trencher-men with three day old. Then he proceeds to fruit, wine, and spices. Of course there is a receipt for ypocras. The consumption of spice in these old households must have been enormous! In making ypocras for great lords, you are to take 'gynger, synamone, graynis (grains of paradise), sugur, and turnesole' (heliotrope). For common people, use ginger, cannel, long pepper, and honey. The distinctions are very long and minute indeed: —

'Now, good son, thyne ypocras is made perfite and well,'—

and you may serve it 'with wafurs' in a stoppered vessel.

Ale must not be served under five days old, and the young man is told not to serve *stale* beer to the guests of his master, because that kind of drink may 'bring a man in disease during many a year.'

Then came minute instructions for laying the table-cloth, with the salt, the bread, the knives, and trenchers. The serving-man is to wear a towel round his necke, 'for that is courtesy,' and he is to carry another on his left arm. My lord's bread is to be wrapped up in a napkin, which the serving-man is to unfold suddenly before his master. The gold and silver plate is to be set out on 'the cupboard' (sideboard), and there are to be plenty of basins and napkins, with water, for washing. The serving-man is to

see that every guest at table has enough to eat and drink 'each person (being placed according) to his degree, and there is to be no lack of bread, ale, or wine. Then comes a very curious function indeed, for a serving-man,—he is charged to have an eye upon quarrelsome guests, and especially to stop the mouth of the critical or 'complaynynge' with plenty of 'bred, ale, and wyne.'

After some further instructions, the young man eagerly expresses his gratitude to his tutor,' 'Now fayre befalle you, fadur! . . . These poyntes by practik y hope fulle welle to preye (prove); and yet shalle y preye for yow dayly while that y leve; both for body and sowle that God yow gyde from greve (guide from grief). Praynge yow to take it, fadur, for no displesure, yf y durst desire more . . . . to know the kervynge of fische and flesche.' After this follows the art of carving as practised about the fourteenth century in England. We meet here with the partridge, the teal, the osprey, the swan, the crane, the peacock, the stork, the bustard, the cony, and the rabbit, or young cony (a distinction which, I need not say, is in our day obsolete). The absence of forks is suggested by a curious direction: the serving-man is to cut the meat into three or four strips, for his master to dip in the sauce. Verjuice is to be served for a sauce with boiled veal, capon, and chicken; liver sauce with swan and cygnet; garlick and vinegar with roast beef and goose; ginger sauce with lamb, kid, pig,

or fawn. For pheasant, partridge, or coney, mustard with sugar. You are to 'brew' a curlew with sugar and salt. Cinnamon and salt are for woodcock, lapwing, skylark, venison, sparrow, thrush, and snipe. A beaver's tail or a salt porpoise is to be served with pea-soup, or frumenty. White herring, salmon, conger eel, and ling, with mustard. Lampreys are to be served with onions. Mackerel with butter. Then we meet with whale, swordfish, sturgeon, crab, &c. Crab is to be 'heated.' Nor are whelks and shrimps omitted.

As soon as ever the master *begins* to say grace (that is significant), the serving-man is to rush to the kitchen, and order up the dishes from the cook, which are to be brought in by the surveyor. He is to have officers at hand to see that nothing is stolen from any dish on its way to the table. There are then some bills of fare. Part of the ornament of the table is to consist in 'devices,' or 'sutiltees' (subtleties), such as figures of Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter. Autumn is to be represented thus:—

> 'A man with sikelle in his hand
> In a ryver of water stand,
> Wrapped in wedes, in a werysome wise,
> Having no deyntethe to daunce.'

For these 'subtleties' or 'devices,' there are given Latin inscriptions. And Mr. Russell informs the ambitious youth that 'these iiij soteltees . . . .

when they byn shewed in an house dothe gret plesaunce.' One of the subtleties recommended is of a religious order: —

'An angelle goodly kan appere,
And syngynge with a mery chere,
Vnto iij shepperdes vppon an hille.'

Among the bills of fare is 'a fest for a franklin.' A franklin may make quite 'an improberabille' feast out of brawn with mustard, bacon, and pea-soup, stewed beef or 'motonn' (it is impossible to resist the original spelling), chykon, capon, rosted goose, pygge, custade, veel, lambe, kyd, cony, pigeoun, frytowrs, and 'a leche lovely,' then 'appuls, and peirs, with spices delicately . . . . bred and chese, spised cakes and wafurs worthily,' with 'bragot and methe,' to drink. Thus, continues Russell, 'men may merryly plese bothe gret and smalle.' 'Bragot and methe' we have already had before us in the Miser's daughter: —

'Hir mouth was sweet as bragot is or methe.'

Mead is a drink made from honey, and not unpleasant. Bragot is a kind of ale flip. The drink at the great lord's dinner is, I need hardly say, the ever-present 'ypocras.'

VI. The subject of the manners of the time of which we are now thinking is, of course, a wide one, and might well become tedious if pursued too long in

one track. For the sake of varying the page, let us for a moment take up the topic at another point, and glance at the sanitary and police regulations of the capital. There is precisely the same simplicity of authority about them as about the instructions of John Russell to the youth who wanted to go into the service of some great lord. This indescribable twang appears in the ordinances of the City of London as an innocent kind of belief that everybody will do just as he is told, and that the whole detail of life may be regulated by interference from without.

We will just take at random from the *Liber Albus*, as illustrations of mediæval life in England, at least in cities and in some of its more striking circumstances, a few of the regulations which apply to the century of Chaucer, or to some time not long before it. To begin with the Pigs, we find this droll ordinance 'De Porcis':—

'Et qe nul porc soit trove par les rues ne par les venelles en la citee, ou en suburbe, ou es fosses du dite citee, desore enavaunt. Et si les porcs soient trovez es les leux avauntditz, soient tuez de qi qils soient trovez; et ceux qi les tuent, les eient fraunchement et quitement sanz nul chalenge; ou soit le porc rechate de celuy qi le deit pour iiii deniers. Et qi pork voedra norir, le norise deinz sa measoun.'

That is to say, that pigs are not to be allowed to run about the streets of the city, or its suburbs, or to grub in its ditches. Any pig found running loose

may be killed without blame or challenge to the murderer, only the owner may buy it back for fourpence. Any one who desires to 'nourish' pork must do it in his own house.

From pigs to barbers is, undoubtedly, a leap; but because it happens to come next, we will quote this ordinance, DE BARBOURS:—

'Et qe nul barbier ne soit si ose ne si hardy, qil mette sank en lour fenestres en apiert ou en view des gentz; mais pryvement le facent porter a Thamise, sur peine des deux souldz rendre al oeps des Viscountz.'

It is unnecessary to remind the reader that the barber in those days was the blood-letter, and in this ordinance he is told not to 'dare, or to be so bold,' as to expose blood in his windows, but to have it secretly carried into the Thames, under penalty of a fine. Closely adjoining there is a direction that the watercourse of Walbrook is to be kept clean, and that nothing is to be thrown into it.

Only great lords, or persons going on their errands, or persons under guarantee of great lords, are to go about the city armed after certain churches have struck curfew. At curfew, taverns and ale-houses are to be closed:—

'Defendu est ensement, qe nul ne soit si hardy destre trove alaunt ou wakeraunt parmy les rues de la citee, apres couverfeu persoune a Seint Martyn le Graunt e+ Seint Laurence, ou a Berkyngchirche, ov espeye ou bokeller, ne ove autre arme pur mal fere,

dount mal suspecion purra venir, ne en nulle autre manere; sil ne soit graunt seignur ou altre prudhomme de boune conusaunce, ou de loure message qi de eux serra garant, qi veit lun ou lautre par conduit de lumere. Et si nul trove alaunt countre la fourme avauntdite, sil neit enchesoun de tard venir en ville, soit prys par les gardens de la pees et mys en la Tonelle, le quel pur tiel meffesours est assigne. Et soit lendemaigne arrestie et presentee devaunte le Maire de la citee et Audermans, et solonc ceo qils trouverount qe eux eient trespasse et a ceo soient acustomeez, soient puniz.

'Defendue est qe nulle ne teigne taverne de vyn ne de cervoyse overt apres lavauntdite houre de covrefeu; mas qe eux teignent loure tavernes closes apres cest houre.'

It will be observed that persons going about armed after curfew are liable to be lodged in the Tun for the night, and brought up before the Mayor and Aldermen the next day for punishment.

In each Ward, there are to be appointed Rakers, or Scavengers, for the purpose of keeping the streets clean, and they are to be paid by the Wards.

The projection of the stalls of the shopkeepers is provided for:—

'Item, qe nulles estalles soient hors du mesoun plus large qe de deux pies et demy; et ces soient moveables et flecthables par la discrecioun del Aldermann,

solonc ceo que les ruwez ou venelles sont largees ou strettez.'

A stall is not to come out in front of the house more than two feet and a half; and *that* figure may be reduced at the discretion of the aldermen.

The Wardmotes are to inquire, when assembled, into a variety of matters. Whether there is any huckster, 'hokestere,' in the Ward. Whether tavern-keepers, and others, are selling their articles without proper 'scaled' measures, or in violation of 'the Assize.' Whether there is any leper within the boundaries, or any disloyal man, or incorrect woman:—

'Item, si ascune soit resident ou herberge deinz la Garde qi ne soit mye loialx, ne de boun fame ne dessoutz francplegge.

'Item, si ascun feme de fole vye, ou commune tenseresse, ou commune baude, ou putere, soit resident deinz la Garde.'

Again, whether there are any inattentive bakers; or any tavern-poles that stick out too far into the street; or any usurers; or any who overpay masons, carpenters, plasterers, tailors, or other labourers:—

'Item, si ascun paye ou lowe as masons, carpenters, daubers, tielleres, ou as autres laborers qiconqes, plus qe nest ordeigne.'

It may be noted that Saturdays and Vigils are to be paid for as whole days, though the men are only supposed to work till evensong.

Instances of old-fashioned attempts to regulate trade-usage and wages are so numerous that the difficulty is to know which to select. No market is to be held in Cheap, or on Cornhill after curfew by Saint Paul's,—and no market is to be held at all on London Bridge:—

'Qe nul Marche soit en Chepe, ne Cornhul, apres Curfeu sone a Seynt Paul. Qe nul Marche soit sur le Pount de Londres.'

'Fripperers, or dealers in second-hand clothes, are to resell the clothes, furred, as they bought them, and not to take the furs off. They are not to 'revive' old clothes, and sell them for new. Dealers in old clothes are not permitted to sell new ones also:—

'Item, qe Phelipers qui achatent vielx draps ove pelure ou furrure, les revendent come il les achatent. Item, qe nul face dubber ne fuller tielx draps, et les vendent pur novels. Item, qe celuy qe vende et achate tielx draps, ne se medle de novels.'

The prices which tailors shall charge are fixed in detail:—

'Qe Taillours preignent pur un robe, garnisse de soy, xviii deniers; pur une robe, garnisse de fil, xiiii deniers. Item, un cote et chaperoun, x deniers. Item, pur i robe longe pur femme, garnisse de soy et sendal, ii souldz vi deniers. Item, pur un peir maunches, iiii deniers.'

No cart containing charcoal or firewood is to enter

the city for sale, but only after it is sold. Otherwise it is to stay outside the gates, or in Smithfield, or in Cornhill:—

'Et qe nulle charecte desorenavaunt estoise en la citee ove bouche, merym, ne carboun, avaunt qil eit vendue; mais demurge hors de la porte, et en Smythefeld ou aillours ou il est purveux; fors tauntsoulement Ca ornhulle, sur forfaiture de la chose.'

As to Apprentices:—'Nulle apprentiz soit rescieux a meyndre terme quas vii ans, solonc lancien establiement.' No apprentice is to be taken for a less term than seven years, according to the ancient rule.

Here is a specimen of the manner in which the prices paid to labourers were 'regulated.' It will be noted that they are not to be allowed anything for the mending of their tools:—

Item, qe Masons, Carpenters, Plastrers, et Sawyers, preignent parentre Pasche et Seint Michel vi deniers le jour; et de Seint Michel a Pasche, v deniers; et preignent la Samady, si la semaigne soit entiere, pur jour entier, et pur jours de festes: et pur amendement de lour instrumentz ne preignent riens.'

Any one overpaying a workman is to be fined forty pence; and the workman, taking more than his due, is to be imprisoned for forty days:—

'Et si nul doune plus a nul Overour qe dessuis est dit, paie a la Ville xl souldz, saunz nul pardoun; et celuy qi plus prent, avera emprisonement par xl jours.'

Here are the prices of boots, shoes, and gloves;—the material, cordovan, sheepskin, or cowskin, being carefully specified:—

'Item, qe un peir de souliers de cordwan soient venduz pur vi deniers; i peire de vache, pur v deniers; i pair botis de cordewayn, pur iii souldz vi deniers; i peir de vache, pur iii souldz. Item, i peir gauntz de berbis, pur i denier obole, et le meillour pur ii deniers.'

Breeches-makers, button-makers, girdle-makers, and pin-makers, are also 'regulated.'

I have in another place noticed the surprising faith that our ancestors appear to have had in oaths, and vague ordinances; *e.g.* an ordinance that everybody shall keep certain other ordinances!

The Scavengers were sworn to keep the streets clean, and to see that chimneys, &c. were made of stone, 'against peril of fire.' 'So God and the saints help you!'

'Vous jurrez, qe vous surverrez diligientiement qe lez pavementz deinz vostre Garde soient bien et droiturelement reparaillez, et nyent enhauncez a nosance dez veysyns; et qe lez chemyns, ruwes, et venelles soient nettez dez fiens et de toutz maners dez ordures, pur honestee de la citee; et qe toutz les chymyneys, fournes, terrailles, soient de piere, et suffisantement defensables encontre peril de few; et si vous trovez rien a contraire, vous monstrez al Alderman, issint qe lAl-

derman ordeigne pur amendement dicelle. Et ceo ne lerrez—si Dieu vous eyde, et lez Seintz.'

The oaths of the Beadles and Constables are still longer. That of the Ale-conners is almost alarming. Not only are they to look to the quality, measure, and price of the ale sold in their respective wards, they are solemnly sworn by God and the saints always to be ready to taste the ale of any dealer!—

'Vous jurrez, vous ne saverez nulle braceour ne braceresse, kew, ne pyebakere, en vostre Garde qe vende le galon de meliour cervoise outre i denier obole, ne le galon de secunde outre i denier, ou autrement qe par mesure enseale et pleyn de cleire cervoise; ou brace meyns qil ne soleit avaunt ceo crye, par cause diceo, ou se retre de sa mistiere user le plus par cause diceo crye; ou si ascun face encountre ascun dez pointz, vous certifiez lAlderman de vostre Garde et lour nouns. *Et qe vous, plus tost qe vous estez requis de tastere ascun cervoise de braceour ou braceresse, vous serrez prest del faire;* et en case qele soit meyns bone qil ne soleit avaunt ceo crye, vous, par assent de vostre Alderman, mettrez resonable pris a ceo, solonc vostre discrecioun; et si ascun en apres la vende outre mesme la pris, vous le certifierez a vostre dit Alderman. Et qe pur doun, promesse, savoire, hayoure, ne autre cause qiconqes, nulle braceour, braceresse, huskestere, kew, ne pyebakere, qe face encontre ascun dez pointz susditz, concelerez, esparnirez, ne torcenousement greverez; ne quaunt vous estez requis de tastere cervoise,

ne vous absenterez sanz cause resonable et verray; mez toutz chosez qe a vostre office appendent affaire, bien et loialment ferrez—si Dieu vous eyde, et les Seintz.'

It will be seen that the ale-conner may affix a price, at his discretion, to any ale that appears to him not good enough, and that he is not to accept bribes.

Oysters, whelks, and mussels, are to be sold only by the fishermen themselves:—

'Et dez oystres, et de welkes, et de moulez qe veignent en ville, qe nulle ne lez vende, ne lez avoue, for ceux qi lez peskent et amenent; ne autre pessoun qe lez gentz meynent de lour pescherie.'

The fish sold are to be of equally good quality all the way down the baskets, on pain of forfeiture of the whole:—

'Et que tout manere de pessoun qe vient en ville et quest en clos en panyers, soit autresi boun desouz come desus, ou meillour; et chescun veye soun panyer, qe il tiel soit. Et qi autre vendra, perde la pessoun.'

Nobody is to draw sword or knife within the city on pain of fine or imprisonment. A similar rule applies to striking with the fist; and the fine or imprisonment is to be increased in case blood is drawn:—

'Item, pur la dite pees le mieulx garder, et qe chescun se doute le plus la dite pees freindre, ordeigne

est qe nulle trayte espeye, ou cotelle, ou autre arme; mesqes il ne fiert pas, paie a la citee demy marc ou demurge en prisonee de Newgate par xv jours. Et sil treate saung de nully, paie a la citee xx souldz, ou demoerge en prisone par xl jours.

'Et sil fiert nully du poigne, ja neit il saung treat, paie a la citee iii souldz, ou eit la prisonee par viii jours. Et sil treat saung du poigne, paie a la citee xl deniers, ou eit la prisonee par xii jours. Et que tieux trespassours trouvent bone seurtee, devaunt lour deliverance, de lour bone port.'

Here, it will be noted, is also provision made for the taking of sureties to keep the peace, when once broken.

There are many strict regulations for the imprisonment, the shaving, the pillorying, and, in case of need, the expulsion for life from the city of women who pursue the most melancholy of trades, and even of women who violate social order without being mercenary in their violation of it. This is, 'a cause de lez remoever hors de la citee, ou pur eux faire cassere de ensi mal faire, a plesaunce de Dieu, salvacioun de lour almes, et netture et haneste de la dite citee.' Common scolds 'contenderesses,' are included in the same category, and subject to the same discipline!

'Item, si ascune femme soit trove pur comune puteresse ou baude, et diceo soit atteint, adeprimez soit overtement amesnez, *ove mynstralx*, de la prisone tanqes al thewe, et mys sur icelle par certein temps;

solonc discrecioun dez Mayr et Aldermans, et *la sez chiveux tallez roundement entour sa teste.* Et si ele soit la secounde foitz de ceo atteinte, eit mesme la juwise, et en meism la manere par certein temps, solonc la discrecioun dez Mair et Aldermans; et outre ceo, eit emprisonement de dis jours, sanz redempcyoun. Et al tierce foitz, eit meisme la juwise, et en meisme la manere par certein temps, solonc discrecioun dez Mair et Aldermans; et apres ceo, *soit ameisnez a un porte de la dite citee,* pur toutz jours.*

'Item, si ascune comune putayne soit trove, et diceo atteinte, soite amesnez de la prisone tanqes a Algate, ove *un chaperoun raye, et un verge blanc en sa mayn;* et dilleoqes amesnez ovesqes *minstralx al thewe,* et la soit proclamee la cause; et dilleoque-parmy Chepe et Newgate, tanqes a Cokkeslane, pur y demourere. Et si ele soyt la seconde foytz diceo atteint, soit overtement amesnez, ove ministralx, de la prisone tanqes al thewe, ove un *chaperoun ray,* et mys sur icelle par certein temps, solonc discrecioun dez Maire et Aldermans. Et la tierce foitz, eit mesme la jewise par certein temps solonc discrecioun dez Maire et Aldermans, et *sez chiveux taillez roundement entour sa teste sur* le thewe, et apres *soit amesnez a un porte* de la citee, et forsjure la citee * pur touz jours.'

The part played here by the red cap, the cutting

* Comparing these two ordinances, we see that the copyist, in the first case, went from one 'citee' to the other: the sense (in the first case) being incomplete as it stands.

short of the hair, the 'minstrelsy,' and the 'verge blanc en sa main,' will not escape attention.

If a man or woman is found ministering to vice for money, the culprit to be put in the pillory with a tow-hung distaff in the hand:—

'Item, si ascune homme ou femme soit atteint pur tensurere ou tenseresse, soit amesnez al thewe, ove un conoille ove lyn appelle '*dystaf with towen*,' en sa main, ovesqes ministrallx, et mys sur icelle par certein temps, solonc discrecioun dez Maire et Aldermans.'

Then follow regulations with regard to priests who break their vows of continence, which are similar in character: the pillory first, banishment for the third offence.

That in the time of Chaucer a carpenter was a builder, because houses were largely built of wood, has been said elsewhere in these pages. The nature of the precautions ordered to be taken against fire in the City of London itself curiously illustrates the destructible character of the houses of the citizens. It is true that in the *Liber Albus* we find the following ordinance:—

'De Carpentura Domorum.—Item, qe nulle mesoun deinz la fraunchise soit covert autrement qe de plumbe, teille, ou piere; et si ascuns y soient, qils soient tantost enrascez par lez conestables et scawageours, pernant pur lour travaille come devaunt.'

That is to say, that no house should be roofed except with lead, tile, or stone. But the ordinance

goes on to say that if any such house were found it was to be pulled down, the constables and scavengers taking the material for their trouble. The following regulation also relates to fires :—

'Item, qe les prodeshomes de la Garde, ove lAlderman, purveyent un fort crook de fere ove un maunche de fuste, ove deux cheynes et deux fortz cordes; et qe le bedelle eyt un boun corn, et bien sonant.'

That is to say, that the alderman and wardmote of each ward are to provide, for the purpose of pulling down houses in case of fire, an iron hook, two chains, and two strong cords; and also a good loud-sounding horn for the beadle to blow by way of alarm. Nor is this all :—

'Item, qe chescun qi ocupie tieux mesons, eyent en temps destee, et nomement parentre le feste de Pentecost et le feste de Saint Bartilmew, devaunt soun huys un koove pleyn de eawe pur esteindre tile fewe, si ne soit meson qad propre fountaigne.'

Which, being interpreted, is, that the occupier of any large house shall in time of summer, namely, between the feast of Pentecost and the feast of Saint Bartholomew, keep in front of his house a tub full of water, for the purpose of extinguishing fire, unless, indeed, the house should have a well attached to it.

VII. The congruity of the state of manners and the habits of thought in regard to the regulation of manners exhibited by these ordinances, with what may be

called the manners of the interior, cannot be exhibited in its full force, because some of the instructions for the management of interiors cannot be quoted in a book for general reading. There is, however, one producible touch in a portion of the 'Boke of Nurture,' which relates to the ever-present cats and dogs, in the house of one of those 'great lords of the land,' who were, by the regulations of the City, allowed so many privileges in their personal habits.

When the young man whom John Russell has met in the forest on a morn of May has thanked his instructor for all his 'lovesome' lore about meats, drinks, and serving the table, he inquires what are the duties of a chamberlain. I may note in passing, that in opening the subject, Russell uses the word 'properties' in the modern stage sense. The chamberlain is to prepare for his master clean shirt and breeches, 'a petticoat (the word, of course, means here, and etymologically, a small coat), a doublet, and a long coat, if he wear such.' His hose are to be well brushed, his socks not to seek, and his slippers (which are to be warm) at hand. When the 'soverayne' gets up in the morning, the serving-man is to take care that the clean linen is warmed by a clear fire without smoke. Then he is to spread a foot-sheet before the fire, and set a cushioned chair for his master. He is to have a comb and a kerchief ready for the combing of his lord's head. A great part of a chamberlain's duty is to have pleasant manners. He is with words of mansuetude

'wordus mansuetly,' to pray his soverayn to 'come to a good fire and array him thereby.' Then the serving-man is to hold up the petticoat for him to get into. Then to put the arm-holes of the doublet to his arms. To see that his stomacher be well warmed, and also his socks. To put on his shoes, and fasten them, whether with buckles or with laces. To strike his hosen well up his legs and tie them. Then to lace his doublet. Then 'curteisly' to comb his head with an ivory comb, and hold to him warm water his hands and face to wash. 'Then knele adoune on your knee, and this to your soverayne say, Syr, what robe or goun pleseth it yow to were to-day?' Having handed him *his girdle* (what a difference in dress is disclosed by that one touch!) see that his attire sits all straight upon him, and 'brush busily about him.' Look that all be pure and plain, whether he wear satin, velvet, sendal, scarlet, or grain.

In the instructions to the serving-man for putting my lord to bed there is nothing said about a night-shirt. He is to be undressed before the fire, sitting on a foot-sheet, and the chamberlain is to put on him a kerchief and night-cap. While he is being prepared for bed, he is to have 'upon his back a mantle to keep his body from the cold;' which seems to imply that he is to be stripped quite naked. One of the last instructions for the night to the serving-man is that he is to 'drive out the dogs and cats, or else to give them a clout.' A time in which it was a necessary

part of the duties of the chamberlain of a great lord to put down quarrelling at his lord's table among the guests, and drive out the cats and dogs from his lord's bed-chamber at night, does certainly square with a time in which it was necessary for the police of a capital city to make an ordinance that pigs should not run wild about the streets.

VIII. Following up the directions given by Russell to the aspiring young man in the forest on a May morning, we come to certain instructions for administering a bath to his master, and then to full particulars for a medicinal bath. This was, as may be supposed, a very complicated affair. It was a general instruction to hang sheets full of flowers and sweet herbs around the room, and a great lord was, at the end of the bath, to be sprinkled with rose-water. The patient is to be fumigated with the hot stream of water in which have been boiled hollyhock, fennel, mallow, scabious, wild flax, and numerous other simples. And, after he has borne the hot steam as long as he can, the easy faith of the time pronounces that, whatever his ache is, he shall surely be well.

This may be permitted to introduce another topic, following naturally upon that of the general regimen of life in the middle ages,—the medical practice of the times. There was plenty for doctors to do, if more than ten thousand times as many as existed had been living,—it is in this century, as we have already seen,

that the Black Death appears in our own country in such terrific force. One passage there is in Chaucer, namely, in the Pardoner's Tale, in which there is probably a direct reference to the pestilence,—and it may, perhaps, be quoted in this connexion :—

'These riottoures thre, of which I telle,
Longe erst than prime rong of eny belle,
Were set hem in a tavern for to drynke;
And as thay sat, thay herd a bell clinke
Biforn a corps, was caried to the grave;
That oon of hem gan calle unto his knave,
"Go bet," quoth he, "and axe redily,
What corps is that, that passeth her forthby;
And loke that thou report his name wel."
"Sire," quod he, "but that nedeth never a del;
It was me told er ye com heer two houres;
He was, pardy, an old felaw of youres,
And sodeinly he was i-slayn to night;
For-dronk as he sat on his bench upright,
Ther com a privé thef, men clepen Deth,
That in this contrê al the peple sleth.
And with his spere he smot his hert a-two,
And went his way withoute wordes mo.
He hath a thousand slayn this pestilence,
And, maister, er ye come in his presnce,
Me thinketh that it is ful necessarie,
For to be war of such an adversarie;
Beth redy for to meete him evermore.
Thus taughte me my dame, I say nomore."
"By seinte Mary!" sayde this taverner,
"The child saith soth; for *he hath slayn this yeer,*
Hens over a myle, withinne a gret village,
Bothe man and womman, child, and hyne, and page."'

It is unnecessary to point out the reference to the custom, in the middle ages, of ringing a bell before a corpse, in order that the hearers might put up prayers for the soul of the dead person. But the attention of the reader may, in passing, be invited to the great force of the description here of the death of the drunken man. 'Suddenly he was slain to-night, for as he sat, drunk, on his bench upright, there came a privy thief that men call Death, who has slain all the people in this country; with his spear he smote the man's heart in two and went his way without saying a word.' It was certainly 'ful necessary to be ware of such an adversary;' but the doctor of the time was not a fit watchman.

In the Canterbury Tales we have no Midwife,—a more important personage in those days than the doctor himself, besides that women so often undertook the functions of the 'leech,' and probably fulfilled them well. It is, indeed, quite possible that the natural nursing instinct of a woman,—'*l'instinct céleste du sexe pour le malheur*,' as Buffon calls it,—may have made her in many cases a much safer person to deal with sickness than the Doctor of Physic in Chaucer. We are told that there was in all the world none like him to speak of physic and surgery, because he was well grounded in astronomy; as if Zadkiel or Francis Moore were now-a-days to practise physic on the 'principles' of their prophetic almanacks.

Then we have the old-fashioned elements, hot and cold, moist and dry; and those everlasting 'humours,' which played so large a part in the medicine of our forefathers, down to good old Dr. Buchan, and later. Besides astrology, he had the ancients to guide him,—Galen, Avicenna, and the rest; and a pretty mess he must have made of it between his precedents and the stars. He had the usual characteristic of doctors,—he lived as well as he could, but he kept measure in his eating. He dressed handsomely in red and blue, and yet he was not to be called liberal; he kept that which he had won in his large practice during the great pestilence. Gold being a cordial in physic (there is *one* touch of the medical science of the time; imagine a decoction of half-sovereigns), he 'loved it in special.'

Yet doctors were, of course, often on the track of nature, even in Chaucer's time; and thus we find them at one with their successors. They always puzzle us by the prominent place they assign to two things, 'rheum' and 'humours;' but they can be wise when they like.

Mr. Furnivall, in introducing his 'Boke of Nurture' to the readers, states that he has been referred by Mr. C. H. Pearson to a treatise by Dr. Gilbert Kymes, physician to Duke Humphrey, upon the Duke's state of health; and it is certainly very curious, and very characteristic of the minute prolixity of the times in matters of regimen. It is written in Latin,

and consists of no fewer than twenty-six chapters. The first chapter is written in praise of good health and proper diet! Chapter 2 relates to those things in which diet consists. When we come to food in detail, chapter 5 relates to quantity; chapter 6 to the order, chapter 7 to the time of taking meat and drink. There are chapters on the choice of bread, flesh, fish, fruit, sauces, and the choice of liquors. Then comes that inevitable topic,—regimen of repletion and depletion. Next a chapter, the title of which frankly hints at a fact, which it is curious to think should survive so many centuries about one man—the Duke had lowered his vital force by a process not unknown to dukes and others who cannot govern their passions. Chapter 20 is on rest and exercise. Chapter 21 on regimen of sleep and watching. Chapter 24 is on the occasional use of medicine. Chapter 26 is on the regular worship of God as a means of preserving health! This is a touch of high wisdom which may well redeem a good deal of folly.

When we pass from the sanitary clauses of the medical treatment of the time, we readily note one thing, that anatomy, being in strictness an unknown science, the search for remedies is usually a search for specifics. One or two of the remedial indications of nature (which need not be specified) would not escape being adopted in any age and any part of the world, in almost every form of disease. But the majority of the medicines are supposed to be specific. This is

good for 'phlegm.' That is good for rheum. This cureth colic. That stirreth up the wind. And something else is soverayne against ill humours in the 'hede.' All this, indeed, is common-place. But there was one respect in which our ancestors had the advantage of us in their scheme, however childishly they tried to carry it out. Their faith in the specific qualities of certain things,—one might nearly say of all things eatable and drinkable,—led them to attach more importance to daily ordinary regimen in relation to health than we do. The food and drink were selected for special qualities. The house-mistress, when she made a tansy pudding, thought of the supposed virtues of the herb tansy; and so in other instances. Michelet, in 'L'Amour,' has a chapter in which he insists upon rehabilitating the wife as the guardian of the husband's health, in virtue of her being the preparer of his food. There is no doubt that though what a man ordinarily eats and drinks is not traceably specific in a remedial sense, the notion of handing over to the lady or loaf-giver,—as the word etymologically means,—the key, so to speak, of the household stomach, was a good one. She was usually incompetent then; she is usually incompetent now. But it may, perhaps, be said—and without the smallest idea of chaining up any competent woman from the task she freely selects—that if the majority of house-mistresses had sufficient knowledge of the laws of diet, they might, without making tansy-puddings to cure phlegm, do so much for the health of their hus-

bands, that the doctor, male or female, would be a less necessary person than he is.

Appended to John Russell's 'Boke of Nurture' are some curious documents about regimen of health which, belonging as they do to a later time than Chaucer's, may be used in *à fortiori* sense. If people were no wiser than all this implies in the century or two following, how wise could they have been in the time of the Edwards? What shall we say to a direction to 'eschewe meridiall slepe;' but, that if you *must* sleep in the middle of the day, you are to do it standing up against the cupboard, or at least sitting upright in a chair? Sleeping after a full meal, says the wise writer, doth engender divers infirmities, it doth heat the spleen, it relaxes the sinews, it doth engender the dropsies and the gout, and doth make a man look evil-coloured. You must not sit or stand near a fire, but take 'the flavour of it' afar off; because fire of itself doth aerify and dry up a man's blood, and doth make stark the sinews and joints. When in bed, lie a little while on your left side, but sleep on your right side. This is noteworthy, because it probably corresponds to the practice of most people at the present day. To compose yourself *to* sleep lying on the left side, and then to turn over and sleep on the right,—it would be interesting to know if the practice has always been common everywhere. But our wise man proceeds to say that if you wake in the night, you should give the left side its turn till morn-

ing. To sleeping 'grovelling upon the stomacke or belly is not good,' except in special cases. One would have thought the remark unnecessary, and also the next comment. To sleep upright on your back is utterly to be abhorred. But this probably means face upwards. Here is something which concerns the great night-dress question: 'When that you do slepe, let not your necke, nother your sholders, nother your hands, nor feete, nor no other place of your body lye bare undiscovered' (uncovered?) Of course a night-gown may slip aside or ruck up, but this direction, given as late as 1557, certainly seems to imply that sleeping linen for the body was not in use. To sleep with your own hand, or your bed-fellow's hand, upon your stomach, is good for digestion! It is well to sleep first on the right side, in order that the meat you have eaten may come to the liver, which is to the stomach as a fire under the pot! 'Olde auncyent Doctors of physicke sayth viii howrs of slepe in soumer and ix in wynter is suffycent for any man; but I do thynke slepe oughte to be taken as the complexion of man is.' When you rise in the morning, you must stretch forth your legs and arms, and rub yourself; this is for an inscrutable reason connected with 'the animal spirits,' and to 'make the brain subtill.' One direction which really seems to indicate a difference in the constitutional habits of men in those days, I must omit. You must, however, comb your head, because it 'recreateth the memorie.' Then wash your hands

and wrists, your face, eyes, and teeth, with cold water. Pick your teeth after dinner with a piece of wood. At this date, long after Chaucer, we have both dentifrices and washes for the mouth. There is a most surprising recipe for an eye-water, one ingredient of which is two drachms of woman's milk! Chew mastick before going to sleep, it will preserve your body from bad humours! Let your nightcap have a hole in the top, in order that 'the vapour may goe out.' And there is one very curious direction, which I cannot quote, but which, if followed in, or from, every bedroom in a city, must have made the streets pleasant for passers-by.

It is interesting to note in all these sets of directions, how the minor morals are universally run up into the major. You are to pick your teeth, to comb your hair, to stretch your legs, and live in the fear of God. In John Russell's 'Boke of Nurture,' the marshal who has to give the guests their places is instructed that the Pope has no peer, and takes precedence of emperors. As it was not every man who could have the Pope to dinner, the direction is curious; though it was in strictness necessary, in order to complete the rules of precedence. But the fact may be read, and indeed claims to be read, in connexion with the presence of the religion of the times in all the corners of life as a *familiar* matter. A thousand things may be said of the tendencies of this, in many directions; but there is often a very pleasing innocence in the way in which religious phrases are tagged on to

subjects which are apparently the least likely to suggest serious or devout ideas. 'Now, good son,' says old Russell, to the youth in the forest on the May morning (one must keep all this in mind to taste the full flavour of the incongruity), 'Y have showed the . . . . the Curtesie of Court, and these thow may take in cure in pantry, botery or cellere, and in kerving a-fore a sovereyne demeyne: in this science y suppose ye byn sewre, which in my dayes y lernyd with a 'prince fulle royalle with whom an vschere in chamber was y and mershalle also in halle' (all this being in verse, though, as I am curtailing it, I give it in prose):—

> 'Now good God, graunt vs grace oure sowles never to Infecte!
> Than may we regne in thi regions eternally with thyne electe!'

Conceive this prayer, or invocation, at the end of a book of cookery, in our own day

CHAPTER XII.

FAMILIARITIES OF FAITH.

It need not be insisted upon that the simplest and most demonstrative illustration of the spirit of the middle ages in regard to the familiar treatment of religious topics is to be found in the Miracle Plays and Mysteries; to which we will now pass on, as some points of manners are involved in a curious question relating to the method of their production.

I. To this day, and in the most cultivated communities, the most attractive of all the things that can be devised to bring human creatures together in large numbers, away from their own homes, is a dramatic representation. With how much greater force of attraction anything in the nature of a dramatic show must have operated in the middle ages it is easy to see.

The only thing, perhaps, that can give us, in modern times, any fair idea of the excitement and interest that might have been created, say in Chester or Coventry, by the setting up of the platform or pulpit in the square, for the performance of the mysteries, is the effect produced in a remote country village or town by the irruption of a band of showmen, with tumbling and dancing perhaps, or wild beasts. And even this is a kind of thing of which the present generation, for the most part, knows little. Of the sort of audience to which the miracle plays would have to be performed, we may gather some idea by noting, when we have the opportunity, the reception of a modern dramatic representation by the common people. It is well known that they laugh, not at the best jokes, but at the worst; loudly at those in which there is a touch of brutality or indecency; and loudest of all at the kind of jest they call practical,—knocking a man down, or breaking his head with a tea-tray, or emptying a flour-bag over him. Indeed, neither Edward III. nor Henry VIII. perhaps, would have found such humour

as this very tedious. At all events, we may be sure that a dramatic representation taking place in the street before a mixed multitude, would be utterly unattractive unless it contained a great deal of sheer coarse buffoonery. What the text of the miracle plays was we abundantly know, but we are bound to infer that there was plenty of 'gagging,' too, in the representation; improvised local allusions, for example. It is morally certain that such a thing as any fresh domestic scandal would be lugged in, head and shoulders, by the performers, and greatly relished by the hearers.

What some of us may find a difficulty in conceiving is, that this kind of thing should take place in, or in connexion with, any performance or exhibition claiming to be sacred. But the difficulty is by no means insuperable. We have all read of devotees who whip their gods, quite in good faith; of worshippers, who with one hand tell their beads and with the other pick pockets; of Ivan the Terrible, who used to say his prayers immediately after seeing his prisoners tortured.

It is by no means impossible to conceive a laughing devotion, however oddly the words sound thus conjoined. Grinning has surely as much to do with religion as jumping, shaking, or spinning. The northern nations have never attempted, or at least have never been able, to keep their humour wholly outside of any portion of their lives. The mythology of the

ancient Scandinavians is full even to overflow of deliberate nonsense; and the most casual observer of a Gothic cathedral knows that the heads and hands which reared the solemn nave and the heaven-pointing spire, were not able to keep the laugh down when they got to the gargoyles.

One thing of importance in the consideration of this subject is, that, whereas vulgar human nature usually finds something to laugh at in the pain of others, there was a great deal of pain flaunted in men's faces by the religion of the middle ages. The idea of moral retribution was familiar to the mind in myths in which the Devil and the wicked people got the worst of it, and underwent plenty of rude punishment. But the *pure* terrible or horrible cannot long prove attractive to the human mind; and accordingly we perpetually find it running into the grotesque; and from the grotesque to the ludicrous is but a step.

Nor is this all. There is no belief, but is dashed, or occasionally pulled back, or twitched at by some faint degree of *un*belief. This is very particularly the case with belief in what is painful. Take an ordinary Church-going Englishman of the lowest class: a man, who has been christened and confirmed, and who would be very much shocked if you were to tell him he was no Christian. That his religion is nothing but a coarse, ignorant superstition, you speedily discover if you happen to refer to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper;

for he immediately informs you that he never goes to that, for he is 'not holy enough'—an expression I have myself heard over and over again. But now push matters a step farther, and ask him if he believes in some particular miracle, or in heaven and hell, and he will, probably say, 'Yes, of course,—do you take him for a savage?' Yet, on the Monday morning you will very likely overhear him jesting about it in a manner which plainly and positively shows that, unless when he is under the direct influence of immediately suggested fear, he believes in nothing of the kind. To this day, and *at* this day, there is a profoundly humorous incongruity between the assumption underlying the manner in which divines go about to discuss hell, and the concealed disbelief in hell of the enormous majority of the people. To this day, too, the Devil is rather a butt than a terror with the same majority; the majority, namely, who are incapable of receiving truth, except in the form of a mythology; of conceiving God, except as a patron; of conceiving evil, except as an inconvenience, greater or less; and equally incapable of conceiving duty, except as obedience (unlikely, even to a joke, to be generally rendered), required by an appointed officer of some kind or other.

To this majority a miracle-play would even now be acceptable; nor would the presence—as present assuredly it would be, of much rough humour—exclude a good deal of such reverence as the majority are capa-

ble of; much less would it exclude frequent touches of human tenderness.

II. In one of the Coventry Mysteries, *The Miraculous Espousal of Mary and Joseph*, there are touches of really infantine simplicity. Let us imagine the theatre set upon wheels, in order that it may be moved from place to place in the city, the actors ready upon the sheltered platform; and the people gathered below in large numbers. Issachar, the 'Bishop,' comes forward first and bespeaks silent attention from the audience, in the usual form:—

'Lystenyth, lordynges both hye and lowe.'

He then goes on to explain that, according to a certain 'sawe' in the 'lawe of God'—

'. . . . At xiiij yer' of age
Every damesel whatso sche be,
To the encrese of more plente,
Shulde be brought in good degre
On to here spousage.'

This is the crude doctrine of 'the fat-faced curate, Edward Bull,' put in practice; with the omission of the ornamental touches! However, Joachim and Anne, the father and mother of 'our ladye,' who have already devoted her to God, now coming up with the young Mary, Issachar naturally supposes she has come to her 'spousage,' like the rest. But Mary explains

that it is her intention to 'levyn evyr in chastyte.' This provokes Issachar to inquire how it is that she will not 'to weddyng go;' upon which Mary states, in detail, that she had been devoted by her father and mother:—

> 'Whan I was born in here bower,
> To the temple offryd I was.'

Embarrassed by the conflict between the vow and the positive law of 'espousage,' Issachar asks advice of a priest, who recommends that they should all engage in prayer directly. Accordingly the *Veni Creator* is sung: after which Issachar, 'knelynge on kne,' prays to 'the Lorde' that he will make clear his will in the difficulty created by this 'dolefúl doubt.' An Angel immediately appears upon the stage, and informs Issachar that his prayer is heard, and that he is to

> 'Take tent and undyrstond
> That it is goddy's owyn bydding
> That all kynsmen of Davyd the kyng

shall bring their offerings to the Temple, with white 'yerdes,' or rods, in their hands; that note is to be taken of the one who shall bring a white rod that shall bloom; for that it is the will of God that 'he shal be the maydeny's make' (the maiden's mate).

Issachar, the Bishop, then makes a proclamation, and Joseph comes forward and gives the audience to understand that he is a very aged person:—

'In gret labore, my lyff I lede,
Myn ocupasyon lyth in many place,
For ffebylnesse of age my Jorney I may not spede,
I thank the, gret god, of thi grace.'

Indeed, he lies down upon the floor of the stage, out of sheer exhaustion:—

'Age and febylnesse doth me embras,
That I may nother well goe ne stond.'

Another proclamation is now made, to the effect that every living man of the house of David is to present himself before the Bishop, with a white rod in his hand, and that Mary is to be married to one of them.

Joseph exclaims:—

'Benedicite, I cannot undyrstonde.'

The idea of being married is too much for him. He says he has 'ben mayden evyr and evyr mor wele ben':—

'It is a straunge thynge, an old man to take a yonge wyff!
But, nevyr the lesse, no doute, of we must, forth to towne.
Now neybors and kynnysmen lete us forth go:
I shal take a wand in my hand, and cast of my gowne,
Yf I falle, then I shalle, gronyn for wo.'

The people now came up, and present themselves, carrying their rods before the Bishop, Issachar; except Joseph, who lags behind:—

'Now wolde God I wer at hom, in my cote;
I am aschamyd to be seyn veryly.'

When they have all presented their offerings but Joseph, the last man in the procession rallies him, and says, 'Com on man, for schame!' To this Joseph makes answer that it is all very well to say, Come on! but not so easy for him to do it:—

'Com? ye, ye, god help, full fayn I wolde,
But I am so agyd and so olde,
That both my legs gyn to folde;
I am ny almost lame.'

No person, having as yet presented himself with a blossoming rod, the Bishop, disconcerted, avers that he can 'no sygne a spy.' But his attention being called to Joseph, who still lags behind, he rebukes him:—

'Whath, Joseph! why stande ye there by hynde?
I wis, ser, ye be to blame.'

Joseph answers that he cannot find his rod:—

'Ser, I kan not my rodde fynde,
To come ther in trowth me thynkyht shame.'

But this is only an excuse, and he is sharply reproved by the Bishop for his slackness:—

'Offyr up your rodde, ser, in goddys name;
Why do ye not as men yow pray?'

To this Joseph meekly replies that he is lame:—

'In soth I com as fast as I may.'

Scarcely able to uplift his arms for feebleness, he presents his rod, and is, of course, greatly astonished to see it break out in flower:—

'Lo, lo, lo, what se ye now?'

Issachar is quite as much surprised:—

'A mercy! mercy! mercy! lord, we crye!
The blyssyd of god we see art thou!'

There is then a stage direction that all the performers are to say 'â mercy, a mercy.' After which the Bishop proceeds:—

'A gracyous god, in hevyn trone!
Ryht wundyrful thi werkys be.
Here may we see a merveyl one,
A ded stok beryth flours ffre.
Joseph, in hert, with outen mone,
Thou mayst be blyth, with game and gle,
A mayd to wedde, thou must gone,
Be this meracle I do wel se
Mary is here name.'

Joseph remonstrates:—

'What! shulde I wedde? god forbede!
I am an old man, so god me spede,
And with a wyff now to levyn in drede
It wore neyther sport nor game.'

We may well imagine that the audience would laugh at this, all the 'reverence' in the world, notwithstanding. The Bishop earnestly expostulates with the old man:—

'Agens God, Joseph, thou mayst not stryve;
God wyl that thou a wyff have;
This fayr mayde shal be thi wyve;
She is buxom and whyte as lave.'

But poor Joseph again remonstrates. It will be his death. His 'wyff' will hit him, and give him a black eye:—

'A! shuld I have here? ye lese my lyff.
Alas! der god, shuld I now rave?
An old man may nevyr thryff
With a yonge wyff; so God me saue!

Nay, nay, sere, lett bene;
Shuld I now, in age, begynne to dote,
If I her chyde, she wolde clowte my cote,
Blere my ey and pyke out a mote,
And thus oftyn tymes it is sene'

The Bishop Issachar is, however, inexorable, and calls upon the people, one and all, to note how Joseph's rod is flowering. Then there is a stage direction for the singing of 'Blessed be the Holy Trinity.' Afterwards ensues the following dialogue:—

'*Bishop.* Joseph; wele ye have this mayden to your wyff,
And here honour, and kepe, as ye howe to do?

Joseph. Nay ser, so mote I thryff,
I haue ryght no nede therto.
Bishop. Jôseph ; it is goddys wyl it shuld be so ;
Sey after me, as it is skyl.
Joseph. Here, and to performe his wyl, I bow thereto.'

Mary is then asked the usual formal questions, and consents:—

'*Mary.* In the tenderest wyse, fadyr, as I kan,
And with all my wyttys ffyff.
Bishop. Joseph ; with this rynge now wedde thi wyff,
And be her hand, now, thou here take.
Joseph. Ser, with this rynge, I wedde her ryff,
And take here now here, for my make.
Bishop. Mary, mayd, with outyn more stryff,
On to thi spowse, thou hast hym take.
Mary. In chastyte, to leden my lyff,
I shal hym nevyr for sake,
But evyr with him abyde.'

Joseph having already taken great pains to make everybody understand that he is a 'man of age,' and receives Mary as a sister, Mary explains in the frank phrase of the day that she takes *him* as a brother, and then adds:—

'I shal be trewe, be not dysmayd
Both terme, time, and tyde.'

The Bishop, much delighted, breaks out thus:—

'Her is the holyest matromony that evyr was!'

Of course, the occasion demands some singing:—

'The hyg names of our lord we wele now syng by,
We all wele this solempn dede record
Devowtly.'

Here is interpolated a stage direction for some singing, and then follows the dismissal:—

'Now goth hom all, in goddys name,
Wher as your wonying was before:
Maydenys, to lete her go alone it wore shame,
It would hevy your hertes sore;
Ye schal blysse the tyme that sche was bore.
Now look ye at home her brynge.'

The Bishop, however, addresses Joseph, with some expedient counsel, to the effect that as he is old, and his wife young, it will be as well, to prevent scandal, that 'iij damysellys' should live with her, 'evyl langage for to swage.' Susanna, Rebecca, and Saphora, declare their readiness to go with her, and Anna, the prophetess, gives Mary some good advice:—

'I pray to God thee save;
Pray thee, mary my swete chylde
Be lowe, and buxhum, meke, and mylde,
Sad, and sobyr, and nothyng wylde,
And goddys blyssynge thou schalt haue.'

Joseph is, however, unable to take his 'wife home; for a very good reason, he has none to take her to. So he departs for a time, and hires a lodg-

ing. Upon his 'Return,' he says he knows he has been a long while away, but that he has succeeded in taking 'a pretty little house:'—

'Mary wyff, and mayd, mose gracyous:
Displese yow not, I pray yow, so long I haue be;
I have hyryd for us a lytyl praty hous,
And ther in, ryght hesely, levyn wole we.'

But, as he had been married upon compulsion, and was not prepared to support the expenses of a household, he announces his intention of going out to work for exactly nine months:—

'I must gon owth hens fer yow fro,
I wyll go laboryn, in fer contre,
With trewth, to maynteyn our housholde so.'

He adjures his 'jentyl spowse' to take care of herself, and avoid all occasion of scandal; and Mary bids him a pious farewell, concluding with a prayer to God, which cannot be repeated: modern usage having banished from customary talk one of the words which it contains. It is a very frankly phrased request that she may be protected from all attacks of a kind that would shock the 'iij damysellys.'

III. The Mystery which follows this in series continues the history. During the absence of Joseph, the Angel Gabriel visits Mary in Galilee, and informs her, in so many words, that the Holy Ghost wishes to make

her the mother of a son, who shall 'reign in the house of Jacob' for ever. After some puzzling on Mary's part, and some explanation on the Archangel's, 'the aungel makyth a lytyl restynge, and Mary beholdeth hy (looks up), and the aungel seyth:—

'The Holy Ghost
Abydyth thin answere and thin assent.'

He tells her that all the blessed spirits, all the good livers, and the chosen souls that are in hell and wait for Jesus, are anxiously looking for her 'assent to the incarnation.' They all, he says:—

'Thin answer desyr to here:
And thin assent to the incarnacion:
Gyff me myn answere, now, lady dere?'

Adjured with so much chivalric courtesy, Mary, at last, consents:—

'With all mekenes I inclyne to this acorde:
Bowynge down my face, with all benyngnte.
Se here, the hand mayden of our Lorde,
Aftyr thi worde be it don to me.'

Gabriel goes into raptures of gratitude:—

'Gramercy! my lady ffre;
Gramercy! of your aunswer on hyght;
Gramercy! of your grett humylyte;
Gramercy! ye lanterne of lyght!'

He calls her a turtle, God's dear daughter, God's

mother, God's sister, and companion in dalliance [*pleynge fere*]:

'Fare weyl turtyl; Goddys dowter dere:
Fare wel Goddys modyr; I the honowr:
Fare wel Goddys sustyr, and his pleynge fere;
Fare wel Goddys charmer, and his bowr!'

And the play concludes with chanting, as usual.

IV. The sequel to this is another Miracle Play, which deals with the jealousy of poor old Joseph. He returns from the 'far country,' where he has been working hard, and knocks at the door:—

'*Mary.* It is my spowse, that spekyth us to,
On do the dor, his wyl were wrought.
Well come hom, m'y husbond der!
How have you ferd, in fer countre?'
Joseph. To gete our levynge, with owtyn dwere,
I have sore laboryd, ffor the and me.
Mary. Husbond, ryght gracyously, now come be ye;
It solacyth me sore, sothly, to see you in syth.'

Joseph finds her face too bright to look upon:—

'*Joseph.* Me mervelythr, wyff! surely your face I can not se,
But as the sonne with his bemys whan he is most bryth.
Mary. Husbond, it is, as it plesyth our lord, that grace of hym grew.
Who that evyr beholdyth me veryly,
They schal be grettly steryd to vertu;
Ffor this gyfte, and many moo, good Lord gramercy!

Joseph. How haste thou ferde, jentyl mayde,
Whyl I have be out of londe?'

Mary replies that she has fared 'after the wyl of goddys sonde' [word]. But Joseph, after a simply-phrased criticism of Mary's changed figure, which cannot be repeated here, says:—

'That semyth evyl I am afrayd . . . .
I dred me sore, I am betrayd . . . .
Now, dame, what thinge menyth this? . . . .
Sey me, Mary, this childys fadyr who is?'

Mary answers, to his confusion, that 'the child is goddys,' and his. But Joseph will not be comforted:—

'Alas, and welaway!
Alas, dame! why dedyst thou so?
For this synne, that thou hast do,
I the for sake, and from the go,
For onys evyr, and dy.
Mary. Alas gode spowse! why sey ye thus?
Alas dere hosbund a mende your mod!
It is no man, but swete Jhesus,
He wyll be clad in flesch and blood,
And of your wyff be born.'

The damsel, Saphora, now puts in a word, and quotes 'the Aungel,' but Joseph will not hear of such a thing:—

'An Angel! alas, alas! fy for schame
Ye syn now, in that ye to say;
To puttyn an Aungel in so grct blame.
Alas, alas! let be do way;

It was sum boy began this game,
That clothyd was clene and gay,
And ye geve hym now an Aungele name,
Alas, alas! and welaway,
That evyr this game be tydde!'

He then quotes a proverb: — 'One man bends the bow, but another catches the bird.' Seeing her husband's distress, Mary puts up a prayer for his sanity:—

'A gracyous God! in hefne trone!
Comforte my spowse in this hard case;
Mercyful god, amend his mone,
As I dede nevyr so gret trespas.'

Poor old Joseph remains inconsolable. 'Didn't I tell you so?' says he:—

'Lo, lo, sers! what told I yow,
That it was not for my prow,
A wyff to take me to,
An that is wel sene now;
Ffor Mary, I make god a vow,
Is grett with childe, lo!'

But there is one resource; he will go and inform the bishop, and get his wife stoned to death:—

'Alas, why is it so?
To the busshop I wole it telle,
That he the law may here do,
With stonys her to qwelle.'

In accordance with the record, however, he thinks better of it:—

> 'Nay, nay, yet God forbede!
> That I should do that vengeabyl dede.'

Finally, he decides to leave Mary for ever, and goes out again on his travels; but is met by an angel, just as he has closed the door behind him:—

> 'Joseph! Joseph! thou wepyst shyrle,
> Fro thi wyff why comyst thou owte?'

'Good sir,' says Joseph, sobbing;

> 'Good ser! lete me wepe my ffylle,
> Go forthe that wey, and lett me nowght.'

But, of course, the angel informs him that all is well, and that he must immediately go back and comfort his 'wife:'—

> 'Go chere her, therefore, I say.'

'Ah, lord god!' exclaims Joseph:—

> 'A, lord god! benedicite!
> Of thi gret comforte I thank the,
> That thou sent me this space;
> I myght wel a wyst pardé,
> So good a creature as sche,
> Wold nevyr a donne trespace.'

We have then have the following 'scene' between Joseph and Mary:—

'*Joseph.* Alas! for joy, I qwedyr & qwake!
Alas! what hap now was this?
A mercy! mercy! my jentyl make, (*gentle mate*)
Mercy! I have seyd al a mys;
All that I have seyd here I for sake,
Your swete fete now let me kys.
Mary. Nay lett be; my fete not tho ye them take;
My mowth ye may kys, I wys,
& welcome on to me.
Joseph. Gra'mercy! myn owyn swete wyff!
Gramercy! myn hert! my love! my lyff!
Schul I nevys more mak suche stryff,
Betwix me & the!'

An adjacent Mystery turns upon the visit of Mary to Elizabeth. But I must here quote an address, to be spoken to the audience, without which the picture would be incomplete. It must be understood, in explanation of the first verse, that the *next* Mystery is the Trial of Joseph and Mary:—

'A voyd seres! And lete my lorde the buschop come,
And syt in the courte, the lawes ffor to doo;
And I schal gon in this place, them for to somowne,
The that ben in my book, the court ye must com too.

'I warne yow here, all a bowte,
That I somown you, all the rowte,
Loke ye fayl, for no dowte,
At the court to pere.'

'Both John Jurdon, & Geffrey Gyle,
Malkyn Mylkedoke, and fayr Mabyle,
Stevyn Sturdy, & Jak at the style,
& Sawdyr Sadeler.

'Thom Tynkere, & Betrys belle,
Peyrs Potter, & Whatt at the welle,
Symme Smalfeyth, & Kate Kelle,
& Bertylmew the boche.

'Kytt cakeler, & Colett crane,
Gylle fetyse, & fayr Jane,
Powle pewtererè, & Pennel prane,
& Phelypp the good flecchere.

'Cok crane, and Davy Drydust,
Luce Lyer, & Letyce Lytyl trust,
Miles the miller, and Colle Crake crust,
Bothe Bette the Baker, and Robyn Rede.

And loke ye rynge wele in yowr purs,
For ellys yowr cawse may spede the wurs,
Thow that ye slynge goddys cars,
Evyn at myn hede, ffast com away!

'Bothe Boutyng the Browstere & Sybyly Slynge,
Megge Merywedyr, & Sabyn Sprynge,
Tyffany Twynkeler, ffayle for no thynge
The courte schal be this day.'

V. There is nothing in all this which is not familiar to a certain class of readers, and it is only reproduced now, because it seems a necessary illustration of the spirit of the time in some leading particulars. We have here, in full blow, its boyishness, its coarse mythology, its plainness of speech in regard to what we now consider enclosed topics; and we find ourselves compelled to return for a moment to a ques-

tion of minor morals in connexion with these public performances.

From certain passages in the Mysteries, and Miracle Plays, it has been concluded that performers of both sexes appeared upon the stage totally unclad, when the action of the piece required it. It may be so; but I confess I very much doubt it. The story of the Fall in Eden would naturally be told in dialogue which expressed the facts as they are told in Genesis, iii. 7; but this is poor authority for concluding that in the representation no liberties were taken with those facts. Why not in this particular, as well as in a thousand others? We know the poverty of stage appliances in those days, and in days much later. It is, of course, a burlesque, when Bottom says, the man who is to 'present wall' must have 'a piece of loam, or some rough-cast,' to indicate his function; but the spectators of plays, even in Shakspeare's days, to say nothing of the days of Garrick, were undoubtedly required to accept 'illusions' quite as wide of the mark. In modern times we do not, it is true, play Macbeth in silk stockings and wig, but we often have to wink with both eyes at the discrepancy between the representation and the fact intended to be presented—as, for example, when an elderly man or woman plays a juvenile part. And I think it is quite easy to conceive ways in which some degree of modesty might have been preserved, and yet a sufficient degree of completeness secured in the illusion of

the scene. Madame Wharton, as Lady Godiva at Coventry, and Mademoiselle Abingdon as Eve at Paris, were neither of them *unclad*—whatever may be said of their clothing. Nor does *this* method of 'presenting' the nude exhaust the obvious possibility of the case. I have more faith in what I observe to be unchangeable in human nature than in rough deductions from small facts remote in time and place; and, in the teeth of the very worst thing known to the scavengers of vice, I hold nothing to be so unchangeable in human nature as a certain degree of reserve as to the body.

Thinking, as I do, that the modesty of our forefathers was greater than is represented or suggested by antiquaries, I of course reject all that has been written upon their comparative virtue or purity considered in contrast with their minor morals or behaviour. I hold that the question scarcely arises upon such evidence as we possess; but I particularly dislike all prosing about the superior depth of their virtue in spite of the greater frankness of their personal habits. It seems to me that the proportions of vice and virtue do not vary so much, in different times and places, as the standards of both. It is not surely so much a question of quantity, as of the height at which the moral temper of the time or place pitches its requirements; and it is obvious that the key-notes of virtue and vice could not have been pitched so high as they now are in times when the manners were so coarse.

Boccaccio is at pains to apologise for some of the laxity of manners which prevailed in Italy, by explaining that it followed naturally upon the breakdown of the usual domestic order under the pressure of the Black Death. To this must be added one of the strongest 'points' made in the story of Griselda, as told by him and by Chaucer. It is made the crowning point of her submission to her lord that she is willing to sacrifice her modesty—or rather to dispense with some of the usual insignia of modesty. In Chaucer, when she is dismissed from her husband's house, the wife says:—

'"My lord, ye wot that in my fadres place
Ye dede me strippe out of my pore wede,
And richely me cladden of your grace;
To yow brought I nought elles out of drede,
But faith, and nakednesse, and maydenhede;
And her agayn my clothyng I restore,
And eek my weddyng ryng for evermore.
The remenant of your jewels redy be
Within your chambur dore dar I saufly sayn.
Naked out of my fadres hous," quod sche,
"I com, and naked moot I torne agayn.
Al your pleisauns wold I fulfille fayn;
But yit I hope it be not youre entent,
That I smocles out of your paleys went.
Ye couthe not doon so dishonest a thing.
. . . . . Wherfore I yow pray
Let me not lik a worm go by the way."'

In Boccaccio, the people all desire that Griselda

may have an old gown to cover her, which is denied. In Chaucer's version of the story this request is not made, but the people are very angry at the hard lot which sends Griselda back to her father, in the guise of a penitent:—

'And in hir smok, with heed and foot al bare,
Toward hir fader house forth is sche fare.
The folk hir folwen wepyng in hir weye,
And fortune ay thay cursen as thay goon;
But sche fro wepyng kept hir eyen dreye,
Ne in this tyme word ne spak sche noon.
Hir fader, that this tyding herd anoon,
Cursed the day and tyme, that nature
Schoop him to ben a lyves creature.'
Agayns his doughter hastily goth he;
For he by noyse of folk knew hir comyng;
And with hir olde cote, as it might be,
He covered hir ful sorwfully wepynge.'

This method of treating the question of the decent covering up of the human body is scarcely consonant, surely, with such a spirit as must have existed among people who would stand in crowds to see Adam and Eve in the costume of Paradise in a miracle play.

If, however, I could bring myself to believe that the romances and poems of the middle ages were *decisive* evidence, in any direction, of details of manners, I should have no difficulty in believing even that a Wife of Bath in Chaucer's days might really have talked, in a mixed company, as Chaucer has made her

talk. For what the 'Decameron' is we all know; it is not only indelicate, it contains references which cannot be repeated at all in a book intended for general reading. And yet at the close of the ten days, when the ladies and gentlemen have finished their story-telling, the president or 'king' of the little assembly, makes a speech in which, among other things, he says: 'Though some light things have been talked of, and a loose given to all sorts of innocent mirth, yet am I not conscious of anything blameworthy that has passed between us; but everything has been decent . . . and such as might well become this community of brothers and sisters.' The meaning of this, of course, is, that no member of the company had proposed actual wrong doing to any other member of the company; but even then, I cannot, myself, without allowing much for poetic license, accept the 'Decameron' as a hint of the kind of talk that might possibly pass between virtuous people of good rank and culture in Italy in the fourteenth century. I find it very hard not to believe that there was poetic license in the case; *i.e.* that the writer, feeling that the presence of women was necessary to the vivacity of his fable, brought them upon the scene, and then went on with his story-telling in disregard of the *bienséances.*

Yet it must be repeated that the same cause to which so much of the nastiness of the Middle Ages, and subsequent ages too, is to be attributed,—namely, the pervading taint of the Manichæan view of certain facts,

—may have greatly influenced the arrangements for the performance of the miracle plays. In ages when a priest was so privileged a person that he might inflict the *chatiment dé l'enfance* on a young lady under his tuition,* many unnatural things were no doubt possible. But publicity, after all, makes a difference; and I cannot get over the presumptions that seem inevitably to found themselves on the Wat Tyler story and the Godiva story, to say nothing of the fact that such entries as that of 'skins for cupids,' occur in the accounts of the day for the miracle and morality performances.

On the whole, I should think it most probable that people did not appear upon the stage absolutely naked, and that if women appeared nearly naked, they were women of abandoned character, however repulsive it may be to think of such women acting in sacred pieces. The plea that the simple sincerity of the religious feelings of Englishmen and English women in the fourteenth century enabled them to enact to the letter the text of the play without feeling their modesty hurt seems to me to be cant. I cannot believe that there was ever high religious feeling at such spectacles; it must have been a loose, noisy, free-and-easy kind of affair—only a little more serious perhaps, than a punch-and-judy show, with a punch-

* Abelard remarks, with entire frankness, upon the facilities which his right as a priest gave him in his tutorial intercourse with Heloise.

and-judy mob in London streets. Deep, religious feeling, conjoined with the impulse of 'prophetic' defiance, will no doubt enable women to do strange things; for we know what trouble the early Quakers gave to the authorities of Massachusetts. 'Deborah Wilson was constrained, being a young woman of very modest and retired life, and of sober conversation, as were her parents, to go through the town of Salem naked, as a sign.' Lydia Wardel being a young and tender, chaste woman, as a sign to them (the church at Newbury) went in—though it was exceeding hard to her modesty and shamefaced disposition—naked among them.' But I believe the only three things capable of making men and women exhibit themselves totally unclad in public, are the fury of religious excitement, the fury of intoxication, and madness. I do not forget William Blake at Hercules Buildings, Lambeth, enacting Paradise Lost with his wife in the summer-house, naked Adam and naked Eve, and when a visitor tapped at the door, saying, 'Come in!' But even supposing the story to be true, and it is very likely to be false, how far the lady was protected by the 'accidents' of the summer-house, we do not know.

In the stage direction in the Chester play on the Creation and Fall, I must find a substitute for one of the words of the original, which latter, however, may be readily guessed at. 'Then Adam and Eve shall cover [themselves] with leaves, *hyddinge them selves under the treeyes.*' Now, it will be observed, that the

words in italics supply a loophole for decency, and it is impossible to say how many of such loopholes there were in other respects. Let us suppose the Deborah Wilson scene transacted on the modern stage,—care would be taken that it was shown laterally; that Deborah *supposed* to be in a state of testimony (which, to quote old Weller, is 'a more tenderer word' than the proper noun for the occasion) walked up the aisle between the pews, so that we only saw her partially. Is it not quite conceivable, and highly probable that Adam and Eve, dressed in skins, in the miracle play, went through the whole of the hazardous scenes behind something which stood for trees, so that only a portion of the figures were disclosed to the spectator, up to the very moment, when, according to a subsequent stage direction, 'God, puttinge garmentes of skynnes on Adam and Eve,' makes a speech, after which 'God shall drive Adam and Eve out of Paradice, and saye [this] to the aungelles, and mynstrilles shall playe?'

There is one more supposition, and, though it may possibly be contradicted at once by better antiquarian knowledge than mine, I will hazard it here. We know how long it was before women were employed at all upon the secular stage as actresses,—'With limbs so large,'—I quote from very remote memory:—

> 'With limbs so large, and bones so incompliant,
> When you call Desdemona,—enter giant!'

Now, if that was the state of things upon the stage

proper, is it not probable that women never appeared at all in the miracle plays, but that their parts were filled by men 'made up' for the purpose? We know there were 'skins;' we know there were masks employed; we know that the plays were first performed in churches by monks or clerics; of the young clerk Absolom, Chaucer says, quite as a matter of course, that he 'played Herod on a scaffold high;' and even when the players were laymen, we find monks writing the pieces.

VI. To return here for a moment to the general question of manners suggested by this particular question with respect to the performance in public of the miracle-plays, I may repeat that it does *not* seem to me (though far better authorities than I can pretend to be, seem to take it for granted at once) that romances, and illustrations in romances, are conclusive proof of the state of manners at the time when they are written. Would a scene from a prurient novel, or a very flesh-coloured poem of our own day, be proof for our descendants of *our* manners in any particular in which delicacy was (or was held to be) infringed in the story or the poem? Because we find in an old romance a picture of a knight conversing with a lady in a bath, it would surely be wrong to conclude that four or five centuries ago there was any general difference in the conditions under which people usually bathed, or ladies received visitors. There was, no

doubt, a real difference in manners,—it lies upon the surface. But then, I think it stays upon the surface, and goes no deeper. And in what I have been so bold as to say of my unalterable belief in the universal existence of personal modesty as a controlling force exercising itself upon the details of daily life, I have not been unmindful of certain familiar facts. Voltaire's mistress would bathe with a man-servant in the room; an African princess walks about as God made her in the presence of Dr. Livingstone. Some abandoned, half-hysterical woman, comports herself thus and thus on such an occasion:—it is all true, but I retain my opinion. In passing, one may just refer to a passage in the 'Cook's Tale of Gamelyn,' which every one at a glance connects with 'As You Like It.' But that, as appears from the story, men wrestled without any clothes on is obviously a very different matter, for there were no lady spectators. Rosalind and Celia could scarcely have been present at the wrestling in the Cook's Tale, however great might have been their desire to see 'the young child,' as the bold wrestler is called:—

> 'A steede ther was sadeled smertely and skeet;
> Gamelyn did a paire spores fast on his feet,
> He set his foot in the styrop, the steede he bystrood,
> And toward the wrastelyng the yonge child rood.'

For the combatants stripped, apparently, to the skin:—

'He lighte doun of his steede, and stood on the gras,
And ther he herd a frankeleyn wayloway syng
And bigan bitterly his hondes for to wryng,
"Goode man," seyde Gamelyn, "why makestow this fare?
Is ther no man that may you helpe out of this care?"
"Allas!" seyde this frankleyn, "that ever was I bore!
For tweye stalworthe sones I wene that I have lore;
A champioun is in the place, that hath i-wrought me sorwe,
For he hath slayn my two sones, but if God hem borwe.
I wold geve ten pound, by Jhesu Crist! and more,
With the nones I fand a man to handil him sore."
"Goode man," sayde Gamelyn, "wilt thou wel doon,
Hold myn hors, *whil my man draweth of my schoon*,
And help my man to kepe my clothes and my steede,
And I wil into place go, to loke if I may speede."
"By God!" sayde the frankeleyn, "anon it schal be doon;
I wil myself be thy man, to drawen of thy schoon,
And wend thou into the place, Jhesu Crist the speede!
And drede not of thy clothes, nor of thy goode steede."
Barfoot and ungert Gamelyn in cam,
Alle that weren in the place heede of him they nam.' *

And, when the wrestling is over, we read,—

'Gamelyn stood in the place allone *without serk*,
And seyd, "If there be eny mo, lat hem come to werk
The champioun that peyned him to werke so sore,
It seemeth by his continuance that he wil nomore."
Gamelyn in the place stood as stille as stoon,

* I quote this line because the last word may serve for a specimen of its class, in which a very slight knowledge of German lightens the labour of reading. Of course, no one needs a glossary here who can simply recall that *nehmen*, to take, forms its imperfect indicative in *nahm*.

For to abyde wrastelyng, but there com noon;
Ther was noon with Gamelyn wolde wrastle more,
For he handled the champioun so wonderly sore.
Two gentilmen ther were yemede the place,
Comen to Gamelyn, God give him goode grace!
And sayde to hem, "*Do on thyn hosen and thy schoon.*"'

It will be noted here that the young man stands 'alone without any serk,' or shirt, upon him.

VII. This subject of manners in general is, of course, only collaterally related to that of the manner of performing the Miracle Plays; and I will, before passing on, only repeat my firm belief that all the usual talk about the simple faith of our forefathers enabling them to do with perfect simplicity that which we could not now do in the particulars to which reference been made, is quite mistaken. Meanwhile our ancestors undoubtedly had a simpler faith than any of us have in the Christian mysteries,—and in much beside which took the name of Christian,—coming out of the quaint old legends and apocryphal gospels. In the 'Miller's Tale,' the 'heende Clerk,' Nicholas, anxious to get the old carpenter out of the way for a reason in which his young and pretty wife (whom we have produced in these pages) is concerned, refers him to what he had seen in the miracle-play of the Deluge, which belonged to the Chester Whitsuntide series. 'What shall I do to save my wife?' enquires the carpenter. Nicholas replies:—

'If thou worken wolt by good counsail,
I undertake, withouten mast and sail,
Yet shal I saven hir and the and me.
Hastow [hast thou] not herd how saved was Noé,
Whan that our Lord had warned him biforn
That al the world with watir shulde be lorn?'

And the carpenter knows all about it —

'"Yes," quod this carpenter, "ful yore ago."
"Hastow nought herd," quod Nicholas, "also,
The sorwe of Noe with his felaschipe
That he hadde or [ere] he gat his wyf to schipe?
Him hadde wel lever, I dar wel undertake,
At thilke tyme, than alle his wetheres blake,
That sche hadde had a schip hirself allone.
And thertore wostow what is best to doône?
This axeth hast, and of an hasty thing
Men may nought preche or make taryyng.'

That is, Noah had so much trouble with his wife that he would rather she had had an ark to herself, and— 'You had better say nothing about the matter,—don't preach like Noah,—but get to action.' The scene in the Miracle play is very droll. Noah's wife says, 'For all your fuss,—

'I will not doe aftir thy reade.'

NOYE.

'Good wyffe, doe now as I thee bydde.'

NOYE'S WIFFE.

'Be Christe! not or [till] I see more neede,
Though thou stande all daye and stare.'

Noah then declares his belief that women are crabbed and men meek: —

> 'Lorde, that wemen be crabbed, aye,
> And men are meke, I dare well saye;
> That is well seene by me to-daye."

When the ark is made, we have a renewal of the discussion between husband and wife: —

NOYE.

> 'Wiffe, come in, why standes thou there?
> Thou art ever froward, that dare I swere
> Come in on Godes halfe; tyme it were,
> For fear lest that we drowne.'

NOYE'S WIFFE.

> 'Yes, sir, set up your saile,
> And rowe forth with evil haile,
> For withouten anie faile,
> I will not oute of this towne;
> But I have my gossipes everich one
> One foote further I wil not gone:
> Thei shall not drown, by St. John,
> And I may save their life.
> Thei loven me full well, by Christ;
> But thou will let them into thy chist,
> Ellis rowe forth, Noe, when thou list,
> And get thee a newe wife.'

The last touch annoys Noah, who, turning to Shem, exclaims: —

> 'Be God, such another I doe not knowe!'

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Shem answers that he will fetch her in to the ark, but he is unsuccessful in his attempt: —

NOYE.

'Come in, wiffe, in twentye divellis waye!'

Ham then asks if they shall unite their resources and make one more effort: —

'Shall we *all* feche her in?'

Then the 'good gossipes,' of whose company Noah's wife declared herself so proud, sing a song. They declare the 'flude comęs flitting in full faste,' and that 'for fear of drowninge,' they are 'agaste.' Nevertheless they will not move yet: —

'Good gossipes, let us drawe nere,
And lett us drinke or we departe,
For ofte tymes we have done soe;
For att a draught thou drinkes a quarte,
And so will I doe or I goe . . .
Though Noye thinke us never so longe
Heare will we drinke alike.'

Japhet,—or as he is called 'Jeffatte,'—implores his mother to hurry in to the ship: —

NOYE'S WIFFE.

'That will I not, for all youer call,
But I have my gossippes all.'

Shem then forces the strong-minded woman on board. Noah receives her with conjugal courtesy: —

'Welckome, wiffe, into this botte!'

But the lady boxes his ear: —

'Have thou that for thy note [nut].'

NOYE.

'Ha, ha! marye, this is hotte!'

We may conceive the amusement which scenes like these would cause among a crowd of men and women; the shrewish wife drinking with her gossips, refusing to be saved from impending death, and boxing her husband's ear so hard at last that he cries out, 'Marry! this is hot!' And, whatever else they prove, the frank anachronism of the references to Christ and the introduction of the vulgar obstinate *bourgeoise* of the type familiar to the minds of the common people, certainly go to prove how 'simple,' in one sense, were the minds of our forefathers. Such features constitute, in our own day, the very essence of burlesque or extravaganza. While I am writing these words, I happen to recall a Cornish mystery or miracle-play relating to the Fall or Creation, which is perhaps of later date than Chaucer, but in which Eve is as much a shrew as the Noah's wife whom we have just seen. I do not remember her exact words, but they are something like this. Holding out the apple to her husband, who has refused it, she says, angrily: —

'Sir, in fewe wordes,
Eate thou nowe of this apple,
Or else me thou shalt lose!
See, sir, take this sweete fruite,
Or else betweene thee and thy wife
The love shall faile utterlie
If thou wilte not eate of it.'

By-the-bye, I remember that among the stage directions for this play (which was probably translated from the French), there is one to the effect that dresses of white leather are to be prepared for Adam and Eve, and that there are to be trees in Paradise. And turning, at this moment, to Mr. Wright's Notes to the Chester Plays, I observe that he is strongly of opinion that the words in the stage direction, 'stande nacked,' are to be read 'figuratively.' He adds, 'Still, that part of the performance which related to the fig-leaves, could not be otherwise than what would now be considered very indecorous.' Yet the words are less alarming than many which Englishwomen sit to hear in Church. I have been, professionally, in our own Divorce Court, when women, looking like other English ladies, have, without any necessity, stayed and listened to words much plainer. And, as to the fig-leaves, we must, as I have already hinted, remember the trees, the 'minstralsie,' and the general bustle of the scene.

VIII. The subject of the Miracle Plays is one of such fascination,—it gives us such glimpses into the

homely, resolute, yet half-conscious way in which our forefathers endeavoured to get a drama out of their faith,—it presents such a contrast to the modern state of facts in Protestant countries,* in which the drama and religious belief are usually understood to be at enmity,—it affords us such a test by which to gauge some portions of their way of looking at things in daily life, and it is so deeply interesting as dealing with a stage in the history of that class of articulate art which has culminated in modern poetry, drama, and fiction, that I am loth to leave it. Let us take a few points more. To Mr. Wright's edition of the Chester Plays we will be indebted for an amusing account of the manner in which they were performed.' It is from the pen of 'Archdeacon Rogers, who died in 1595, and saw the Whitsun plays performed in Chester, in the preceding year:'

'The time of the yeare they weare played was on Monday, Tuesday, and Wensedaye in Whitson weeke. The maner of these playes weare, every company had his pagiant, or parte, which pagiants weare a high scafolde with 2 rowmes, a higer and a lower, upon 4 wheeles. In the lower they apparelled them selves, and in the higher rowme they played, beinge all open on the tope, that all bchoulders mighte heare

* In Roman Catholics countries, Miracle Plays are still represented, and the testimony of some recent travellers,—I think I remember Mr. G. H. Lewes, Miss Howitt, and Mr. Bayard Taylor among them—is that the effect produced upon the mind is in no way shocking to the religious feelings. It must be borne in mind, however, that people's feelings differ very much, and I should myself distrust all such testimony.

and see them. The places where they played them was in every streete. They begane first at the abay gates, and when the first pagiante was played, it was wheeled to the highe crosse before the mayor, and so to every streete; and soe every streete had a pagiant playinge before them at one time, till all the pagiantes for the daye appoynted weare played: and when one pagiant was neere ended, worde was broughte from streete to streete, that soe the mighte come in place thereof, excedinge orderlye, and all the streetes have theire pagiantes afore them all at one time playeinge togeather; to se which playes was greate resorte, and also scafoldes and stages made in the streetes in those places where they determined to playe theire pagiantes.

The same writer, in another MS., quoted by Mr. Sharp, gives the following additional details: —

The manner of which playes was thus: they weare divided into 24 pagiantes, according to the companyes of the cittie, and every companye brought forthe their pagiant, which was the cariage or place which the played in. And thei first beganne at the Abbaye gates; and when the firste pagiante was played at the Abbaye gates, then it was wheeled from thense to Pentice, at the hyghe crosse, before the maior, and before that was donne the seconde came, and the firste went into the Watergate Streete, and from thense unto the Bridge Streete, and so one after an other till all the paigantes weare played appoynted for the firste daye, and so likewise for the seconde and the thirde daye. These pagiantes or cariges was a highe place made like a howse, with 2 rowmes, beinge open on the tope: the lower rowme theie apparrelled and dressed themselves, and the higher rowme theie played: and thei stoode upon vi. wheeles; and when the had donne with one cariage in one place, theie wheled the same from one streete to another.'

Turning over the pages, I note some points in the words employed (later than Chaucer, though the same words were employed in the same sense in his time) which may repay a few lines. After the fall, Eve tells her 'sweate children, darlings deare' (names of endearment do not fluctuate much in any language), that she and Adam had been dismissed from Paradise —

'Because unbuxom soe we were.'

Here is another case in which a little knowledge of German serves the place of a glossary. We now use the word 'buxom' in a very different sense, but in German *beugsam* (*beugen*, to bend) means, submissive or pliable. I find the word 'daddy,' used by Cain, when a young man, to mean 'father,' just as a child uses it now. I find 'make you warm,' in the sense of 'beat you soundly,' just as 'I'll warm you,' is used now-a-days in what we call the slang of the streets. In the 'Slaughter of the Innocents,' very *dirty* language is put into the mouth of one of the mothers; and this kind of thing is apologised for in the 'banns' or proclamations that go before the plays. There is an official Expositor, who, as I judge from the word 'equitando' placed against his name, rode about and explained to the people, the 'lordyngs hie and low,' the meaning which particular incidents were supposed to bear. I may observe that some of the traditional features in these plays are rather striking. It is well known that the authenticity of one of the most dra-

matic narratives in the Gospels, the story of the woman taken in adultery, is extensively called in question by orthodox critics of the text of Scripture; but whether it be a true story or a tradition, a 'point' made in the miracle-play founded upon it, is worthy of notice. When Jesus writes upon the ground he is supposed to be writing down the crimes of the woman's accusers. It must be added that, with all the rudeness of stage-appliances in those days, the plays must occasionally have proved very affecting. It is impossible even now to read without emotion the scene in which Abraham prepares to offer up his son Isaac: —

ISAAKE.

'Would God my mother were here with me!
Shee woulde kneele doune upon her knee,
Prainge you, father, yf yt may be,
For to save my liffe.'

When the boy, who has pleaded that he is but a child,—

'Put up your sorde, *if your wil be*,
For I am but a child,'

has learnt that it is God's will that he shall die, he says: —

'Be I ouste out of your mynde [forget me],
Your sorrowe maie sone cease,
That yeat you must do Godes byddinge.
Father, tell my mother for no thinge.'

Before closing this chapter, I may refer to a very curious traditional point in the play on 'The Nativity,' namely, that the birth of Jesus gave no pain to his mother. The event is followed, in the play, by an attempt, on the part of one of the midwives, who was incredulous, the stage direction for which cannot be given here even in the Latin. Her hand is immediately palsied. But the very 'figurative' manner in which such a direction must have been obeyed may cast some reflected light upon the general question of delicacy in representation which has gone before. Before the birth, Joseph goes out to procure the attendance of *two* midwives: —

> 'Marie, sister, I will assaie
> To gette towe mydwyffes, yf I maie;
> For though in thee be God vereye
> A-comen againste kinde;
> For usage here of this cittie,
> As manners sake as thinkes me,
> Towe I will feche anon to thee,
> Yf I maie anye fynde.'

I am unable, at the moment, to say whether this trait of 'manners' is invented for the purpose of introducing a sceptical as well as a believing midwife, or whether it was a point of 'manners' in the middle ages to have two midwives at important births. But I strongly suspect the latter is the correct alternative.

One point more I must notice, in the Play of the Shepherds. The offerings of the Four Shepherd *Boys*

are introduced in a manner which is truly poetic and beautiful, and, if the verse be read properly, it will be found to be worthy of any age of English poetry. The first boy offers his leathern drink-bottle, with the quaint and truly boyish remark that, though the stopper is lost it will hold a good drink:—

THE FIRST BOYE.

'Nowe, Lorde, for to geve thee have I nothinge,
Nether goulde, silver, bruche, ner ringe,
Nor no riche robes mete for a kinge,
That I have heare in store:
But that yt lackes a stoppell,
Take thee heare my fayer bottill,
For it will houlde a good pottill,
In faith, I can geve thee no more.'

The Second Boye offers his hood, to keep the baby warm:—

'Lorde, thou arte of this virgine borne,
In full poore araye sittinge on her arme,
For to offer to thee I have no skorne,
Allthough thou be but a childe;
For jewell have I non to geve thee,
For to mantayne thi royall dignitie,
But my hude, then take it thee,
As thou arte god and man.'

The Third Boye—here is a true idyllic touch—presents his woodland flute:—

'O, noble childe of thee!
Alas! what have I for thee,

Save onlye my pipe ?'
Elles trewlye nothinge !
Were I in the rockes or in,
I coulde make this pippe,
That all this woode shoulde ringe,
And quiver, as yt were.'

The Fourth Boye, in really beautiful verse, and in most genial and childlike phrase, offers his nut hook : —

'Nowe, childe, allthough thou be comon from God,
And be God thy selfe in thy manhoode,
Yet I knowe that in thy childehoode
Thou wylte for sweete meate loke,
To pull downe aples, peares, and plumes,
Oulde Joseph shall not nede to hurte his thombs,
Because thou hast not pleintie of crombes,
I geve thee heare my nutthocke.'

I must leave the reader to connect this chapter with what I have already said upon a certain charge of 'materialism,' brought against Chaucer. As for anachronism, that is an endless topic; but we need wonder at nothing that we find in the Knight's Tale, when we find, in the Miracle Plays, Noah's wife sweaying by Christ, and Balak calling on the god Mars! From the fourth verse on page 87 of this volume it will be observed that money was collected at these performances. Lastly, the exclamation of the Bishop, on page 78, 'Here is the *holiest* matrimony that ever was!' after Joseph had declared himself absolutely decrepid, is an amusing comment upon the mediæval doctrine of marriage.

IOHN WICKLIFFE.

CHAPTER XIII.

WONDER, KNOWLEDGE, BELIEF, AND CRITICISM.

FROM the Miracle Plays the transition is easy to the whole subject of such belief in the extra-natural as existed in the age of Chaucer; allied as that is, by obvious psychological links to the religious faith of the time. We have already seen, in glimpses, that the century was one of transition in this respect and in collateral respects. The didactic was taking the-

place of the romantic spirit; the critical, the place of the believing spirit. We cannot affirm that the dogmatic tendency, imperilled in the religious reformation which was initiated in the time of Chaucer, was then dying out; but it was shifting its ground from that of (may I call it) institutionalised miracle, in the visible Church, to that of miracle in a book, judged by the individual soul. The theme is a very large one, and under its shelter we will group a great number of related topics.

I. The atmosphere of wonder in which the minds of men moved in the middle ages we can, of course, realize but imperfectly. We are apt to speak of childlike wonder, when wondering moods are in question; but the nonchalance of children in presence of great spectacles is far more noticeable than their occasional excitability. There is, however, something to the purpose, if illustration were needed, in the eagerness, both of action and of receptivity, that belongs to the mind of early adolescence, when some fancy and some culture exist in connexion with a vivid temperament. Probably a boy of fourteen believes in Aladdin's lamp, or Sinbad's roc, quite as much as the ordinary Englishman of Chaucer's time believed in fairies or the bronze horse of Tartary. As to witches and magic, in spite of our loud, large phrases, the best of us can scarcely be said to disbelieve them even now. If a neighbour were to walk in and declare that he had just now seen a witch,—say old Mrs. Jones, the

landlady's familiar,—riding a broomstick to the moon, we should say he was mad; but there is, after all, a hazy borderland in our minds, where witches may be said to lead a shadowy and doubtful sort of existence, like strange animals that linger in the fringes of cultivated territory. I blush for the man who is not ready to confess that he was disappointed when the sea-serpent was exploded. And with what a thrill of half bashful joy do we read a confirmation of any old legend which contained a wonder—how pleased we are, for example, to be told, whether truly or not, that the coffin of a mediæval saint was of such proportions and such materials that it *might* have floated miles down a river. In Alchemy, pure and simple, every boy believes—at least I am sure I did when I was a boy; and to this day it seems "poor talkin' o'" the correlation of forces and the one ultimate substance, when there ought to be some gold at the bottom of *some* crucible in a solid lump. In the elixir vitæ we have, most of us, faith enough to enable us to find the 'Zanoni' of Lord Lytton quite readable: we should disbelieve in the existence of a Rosicrucian whose address was given in a directory, but that there may be a Brother of the Rosie Crosse—the rosy cross, think of it!—flitting about under the uttermost gables of our civilisation, and that he may know very wonderful things, who can doubt that? To this hour is there a schoolboy who is unprepared to hear of strange "salvage men," men with hoofs for instance, in the interior of Africa? Or that somebody

has found out how to fly in the air or walk on the water?

The peculiarity of the imagination of Europe, after the first revival of letters, and down to the time of the Reformation, was, then, the characteristic of adolescence, — boundless faith in the possibilities of things. What *might* lie beyond the Pillars of Hercules! what *might* some day be found at the bottom of a crucible! Some adventurous, too-happy man, *might* strike upon the encampment of Prester John in the wilds of Abyssinia! Lying dismayed in the shadow of an inscrutable terror, the human imagination scanned vaguely the horizon of the world for an inscrutable help. After the Black Death, a wine of immortality did not seem too wild a notion — was it a more incredible thing than the pestilence? If the past had given no warning and yet had concealed something so dreadful, why should not the future contain something of quite countervailing brightness? The possible combinations even of known matter were infinite; and so long as vast tracts of land and sea remained unexplored, or possible to be found, who could tell what new material of experiment remained to be discovered?

These and similar questions were not, of course, put in form by the average mind of the age, but they would have been, if its faiths or half-faiths had been challenged — for we can see for ourselves that such would have been the natural answers to the doubters. But it must again be borne in mind that the literature —

such as it was—of the age before us and of the preceding ages, whose ideas and tendencies had become incorporated into its intellectual and moral life, was not a printed literature. Though literature of all kinds was, I believe, much more diffused and much more accessible than we are *apt* to suppose, there is, of course, no comparison whatever between the degree of diffusion which attends a printed literature and that which attends a written literature. Hence the involuntary criticism of a multitude of minds was wanting. We know, by our own experience, that the best judgments we form of what comes before us in print are arrived at by a process of brooding or meditation performed in different moods of mind and under different external conditions; and this kind of criticism is possible in a very high degree with a printed literature only; with which we are enabled freely and conveniently to handle our books, to carry them about, take them up at pleasure, and dip into them at all hours. I lay some stress, too, upon the *easy* publicity which attends a printed literature,—I mean with regard to its influence upon the imagination. To grope among written books, difficult of access, is like moving in the dusk,—to read freely in printed books is like moving in broad daylight. Not only is the particular thing we are inspecting seen, by itself, more clearly in the open day; it is seen in its juxtapositions, whatever they are. That Trojan Brute came straight from Troy and founded London, or that Herne the Hunter used to perform a demoniac dance round a

particular oak-tree in Windsor Forest, looks more credible standing by itself than it ever could in juxtaposition with tangible matters of fact, such as we see in the *Times* newspaper of to-day. It is the involuntary criticism of thousands of minds rather than the direct attack of sceptical criticism, so called, which gradually undermines the faith in unnatural wonders. It is hard to say how much a poet believes: that Shakspeare had absolutely no faith in fairies is what one might well hesitate to affirm; but by his time, and before his time, a thousand legendary wonders were passing away, not into non-existence, but into the shadow-land of imaginative literature. The day had come when invention began to be self-conscious. When the poet added to the legend, or altered it, in the face of the world, the world allowing his right to do so, the religiousness of the belief was gone.

The difference between what I have called the daylight of a printed literature and the twilight of a written literature is too obvious to need insisting upon, in its relation to the *popular* belief in more or less unnatural wonders. In what corner of the world could Prester John now hide for long? or the anthropophagi and men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders? Still, we must bear in mind, before we permit ourselves to speak hastily of the credulity of our forefathers, how immensely more powerful in olden times was the influence of personal tradition. The difficulty of eradicating a belief which has reached a rude mind through a long

road of personal tradition, stage after stage, we may discern for ourselves in remote, uncultivated districts. After all, what evidence is like that of direct personal testimony? Indeed, we do not half understand the subject of its influence. At this moment there are not a few of us who would be powerfully affected by passionate persistent assertion, from the living voice of a fellow-creature, that things of the kind we habitually call incredible or impossible had taken place. How often are we surprised into saying that, if a story is not true it ought to be! Who does not feel at times that Freya, with the blue flax-flowers in her hair, ought to exist somewhere if she does not? That if Venus did not arise from the foam of the sea, and keep her court somewhere as queen of beauty, it is a great pity that anything so natural and so fascinating should never have taken place? For one of his poems (and a passage in *Wallenstein*, sympathetically paraphrased by Coleridge, might have been added in founding the charge) Schiller has been accused of 'downright paganism;' assuredly Keats might have been included in the accusation. So perfect, in the case of both poets, is the sympathetic assumption of the pagan emotion and pagan tone in presence of certain myths and certain ideas, that it is almost fair to say that the line which divides imaginative from actual faith is in fact overstepped. Nearly every son of Adam may find a corner of his soul in which some old objective belief, pure pagan, Christian-pagan, or merely fantastic, may nestle and warm itself. If each individual poet is

a maker or creator, the universal poet, which dwells in the bosom of the race of men, is a maker or creator too; and it may be that absolute death can never overtake any work of its fashioning.

In writing all this I have not overlooked what the Wife of Bath says at the beginning of her story. I should indeed suppose that a third of the people of England did *not* then believe in fairies and cognate things and creatures. The friars, as the lady tells us, had done their best to drive them away. But the other two-thirds of the population, even if they were not disposed to believe in fairies, had an appetite for wonders of all kinds. Falstaff is not a bad counterpart to the Wife of Bath, and one cannot help recalling the night scene at Herne's Oak:—

> 'They are fairies: he that speaks to them shall die;
> I'll wink and couch; no man their works must eye,'

says the very fat man as he lies down upon the grass. On the one hand, the mere fact of the merry wives of Windsor taking the liberty of getting the fairies personated betrays that their belief in such creatures was a drowsy belief; on the other, the speech of Falstaff shows that the belief was one that might be aroused from its sleep in the average mind.

At all events, we cannot but believe that in the days of Chaucer, fairies, trolls, and witches, King Arthur and Guy Earl of Warwick, were topics familiar enough at the firesides of the common people. True,

there were the wars, and the ballads of the king before Calais and the Black Prince in Spain; and the political and social disturbances; the religious discussions, and the quarrels of friars and Lollardites, to occupy the minds of men in the prime of life and the thick of its activities; but then there were the old grandames who sat under the great chimney corner, bleared and smoke-dried, who had nothing to do but to turn the spit, to rouse the log-fire, or adjust the caldron. In the summer or autumn twilight, before the curfew rang, and in the winter nights—

> 'When the ivy-tod was heavy with snow,
> And the owlet whooped to the wolf below
> That ate the she-wolf's young;—'

we can scarcely imagine grandame dispensing with the privilege of her years. She would often let her tongue run, and often in the direction of a story of wonder—it might be told ostensibly for the young ones, but the elders would listen. And who can tell what Malkin the maid would whisper into the ears of the smaller children as she crooned them to sleep? The dark in those days must have had terrors and fascinations that it has not now in civilised communities like ours. Anybody who has ever been as a child in a dark room with the old-fashioned shutters, through which the light came by two large dreadful eyelet-holes, may conceive what the night, whether moonlit or moonless, must have been in a house, without windows perhaps, and certainly with chinks and loopholes. Nor could

any degree of use and wont take off entirely the awful effect which an unexpected knocking at the door has upon the human mind — and a sudden knocking at the door, though usually of course with the warning of the footsteps as they drew near, must have been a thing not unfrequent in lonely districts. The arrival of a traveller would stimulate the imagination, and the traveller, too, would have his tale to tell, perhaps by way of making himself agreeable in return for his entertainment. Let us imagine a household group by the rude fireside, where the log or the turf is burning. Suddenly is heard the note of the passing bell — who is it that is dying? Or the wind seems to bear to the cottage the sound of the voices of the chanting monks or nuns at the nearest religious house. Or the youngest child or the eldest dame starts at the cry of a marsh-bird, or a sudden shriek of the wind. They all cross themselves or murmur a benedicite. The husband gets up and looks forth upon the night. He can barely see the church, so far off is it from his home — but the lights through the monastery windows he can see. Again, the passing bell! He shuts the window, and returns to the hearth, sitting down with a little shudder. The grandame sees it with melancholy zest, and begins 'Wel-a-day, John!' — and out tumbles one of her budget of stories.

Paul and Virginia, we know from Bernardin St. Pierre, 'had neither clock nor almanack.' They knew the hours of the day by the shadows of the trees. 'It

is time to dine,' said Virginia, 'the shadows of the plaintain trees are at their roots;' or, 'Night approaches, the tamarinds close their leaves.' 'When will you come to see us?' inquired some of her companions in the neighbourhood. 'At the time of the sugar-canes,' answered Virginia. We smile at this simplicity, but country people retain in much of their talk the same kind of pastoral allusiveness. 'We will put off the party till after hay-harvest'—'We will come and see you next week, because there will be a moon'—these are turns of speech which are not strange in English homesteads far from towns; and they smack of that nearness to Nature, and that conscious dependence upon her hospitality, which the dweller in towns must lose. The Londoner says he will pay the visit or arrange the difficulty when Parliament is up, or when the season is over; he has almost a tendency to make game of the moon, so much has artificial light done for him; the gas-lamps guide his feet without her help, the lime-light nearly puts her out. But even the farmer will soon lose some of his intimate dependence upon Nature: the gas and the steam are busy everywhere, and almost everywhere the townsman leaves his track. 'I saw a glowworm in the hedge just now, mamma,' said a child. 'Are you sure it was not a cigar-light?' asked her mamma—a volume of commentary in a single question. Fortunately, there is one place where, for a long time at least, man must still be dependent, with the old dependence, and inti-

mate, with the old intimacy, with Nature. On the ocean he is not likely to make game of the moon; not even after the setting up of the tunnel or the line of ferry-boats which is to make it as easy to get to America as to Manchester.

Just let us think of a church-bell as a summoner that says it is time. In towns, at least, we could now dispense with the church-bells on the day of rest, though I, for one, should bitterly grieve to lose them. But how different it must have been when the voice of the bell in the church-tower told to hundreds of ears something which would not have been known without it. Conceive the village, thatched and brown, with its mossy old pear-trees, and nutty hedges, and the well, with the bucket, and the scattered houses, and the windmill. Here live the villagers; and the manor-house is two miles off. On the Sunday morning they all know,—Malkin and my lady, gaffer and Sir Roger,—that it is near or about church time; but soon the bell rings out, the time of day has spoken, and they begin to move, in thin streams, across the fields and along the lanes. In cities and towns, the bell of a monastery or a convent would be of much use in telling people the hour; the bell which rang to matins, or complin, or prime; but of how much more use the monastery bell which caught the ear of the hungry or beset or belated traveller in some lonely country spot! At once, he knows that there are shelter and protection for him, and he crosses himself, and hastens onward till he

sees the lights and is sure of his way. For the rest, we still ring bells at weddings and on other glad occasions, and we toll at funerals; but we have so many ways of expressing our emotions now, that the bell is not the pathetic creature it once must have been. The curfew is gone, or only lingers in one or two nooks, I suppose; the passing bell is gone; and the bell of exorcism. It is not at the sound of a bell that the fire is extinguished on a thousand hearths, or that the short, hurried, awe-struck prayer goes up for a parting soul; the bell is not awful, it neither governs us nor guides us; it is not the half-living thing that it once was. And out of how many things that once had as much life has the science which makes Chaucer's Doctor of Physic and Alchemist twenty times more absurd in our eyes than they were in his, taken the life also!

In the time of the poet, we may see how it was in such matters in England, by passages in the Canterbury Tales, even if we had no other guidance or means of inference; and there is infinite pregnancy in the ideas which such passages readily raise. How nearly allied is all this to superstition! It is easy enough to incline towards astrology when we reckon time by the sun and stars: for then they seem really to regulate our lives, and teach us the meaning of the words—'the greater light to *rule* the day, the lesser to *rule* the night.' But when we all take our time from a watch, or a clock at home, the words appear to have become figures of speech.

II. Among other places in which we have glimpses of the superstitious beliefs of the time, mingled with suggestions that they were dying out and utterly discredited already by men of practical sense, the scene in which the clergyman, who is an alchemist, is introduced, must be reckoned not the least striking.

One of the numerous difficulties which have troubled the commentators on the Canterbury Tales arises from the manner and terms in which the Canon's Yeman, man, or servant, is introduced into the 'rout' of pilgrims along with his master; the fact that the pilgrims were at Boughton-under-Blee not seeming to hang together with any scheme that can be thought of for dividing the time occupied by the journey in something like unison with the time occupied by the telling of the stories. As I have elsewhere hinted, I lay no stress upon either these difficulties or the solutions proposed to meet them; because it seems to me more than sufficiently plain that the original design of the series was loosely conceived by the poet—whether the work was ever intended to be reconsidered by him or not. From the number of the pilgrims (it may be repeated), down to the frequent confusions which arise between the poet and his personage, we find ourselves treading upon ground which is insecure. It appears highly probable that the Canon with his Yeman was altogether an afterthought of Chaucer's, and that, not willing to omit so characteristic an interlude as he saw he had an opportunity of introducing, he flung it into

the series when it occurred to him. That he intended to re-adjust his work from beginning to end is quite possible; but, as I have hinted elsewhere, Chaucer was, in my opinion, fully as capable of literary recklessness as any one of us.

At Boughton-under-Blee, then, upon the conclusion of the story of Saint Cecilia, told by the Second Nun, the company of pilgrims are overtaken by a couple of riders; one of them a cathedral canon, in a surplice covered with a hooded cloak, the other his man-servant, and both riding in hot haste. We are told that the forehead of the Canon dropped perspiration; as it were, 'plaintain and pellitory in a distillery':—

'And whan that he was com, he gan to crie,
"God save," quod he, "this joly compaignye!
Fast have I priked," quod he, "for your sake,
Bycause that I wolde you atake,
To ryden in this mery compayne."
His yeman eek was ful of curtesye,
And seid, "Sires, now in the morwe tyde
Out of your ostelry I saugh you ryde,
And warned heer my lord and soverayn,
Which that to ryden with yow is ful fayn,
For his desport; *he loveth daliaunce.*"
"Frend, for thy warnyng God geve the good chaunce,"
Sayde oure host, "for certès it wolde seme
Thy lord were wys, and so I may wel deme;
He is ful jocund also dar I leye;
Can he ought telle a mery tale or tweye,
With which he glade may this companye?"
"Who, sire? my lord? Ye, ye, withoute lye,
He can of merthe and eek of jolité

Not but y-nough; *also, sir, trusteth me,*
Ye wolde wonder how wel and thriftily
He couthe werke, and that in sondry wise."'

This is quite in the vein of the banter which is so frequent with Chaucer:—

'"Wel," quod our oost, "I pray the, tel me than,
Is he a clerk, or noon? tell what he is."
"Nay, he is gretter than a clerk i-wis,"
Sayde this yyman, "and in wordes fewe,
Ost, of his craft somwhat I wil you schewe.
I say, my lord can such a subtilité,
(But al his craft ye may nought wite of me,
And somwhat helpe I yit to his worchynge),
That al this ground on which we ben ridynge
Til that we comen to Caunterbury toun,
He couthe al clene turnen up so doun,
And pave it al of silver and of gold."'

The shy, eager, yet bashful probity in this disclaimer, 'I cannot tell you all his craft, though I do somewhat towards its practice,' is admirable, and reminds one of Verges, 'Yes, I thank God I am as honest as any man living, that is an old man and no honester than I.'

The host and guide of the pilgrims, Harry Baily, now puts the question which has so often to be parodied in all ages—How is that men who possess such wonderful secrets go threadbare? Or—for the question was once put in this form—how is it that an inventor of tremendous explosive forces haggles wearily with governmental departments for a price, when he might plant

himself with his apparatus in the middle of a city and say, 'Give me my own terms, or I will blow you all into the air.' Master Baily wishes to know why a man who could pave the road from London to Canterbury with gold should go sluttishly:—

'And when this yeman hadde thus i-told
Unto oure oost, he seyde, "*Benedicite!*
This thing is wonder merveylous to me,
Syn that this lord is of so heigh prudence,
Bycause of which men schuld him reverence,
That of his worschip rekketh he so lite;
His over slop it is not worth a myte
As in effect to him, so mot I go;
It is al bawdy and to-tore also.
Why is thi lord so slottische, I the preye,
And is of power better clothis to beye,
If that his dede accorde with thy speche?
Telle me that, and that I the biseche."'

To this the Yeman, with a twinkle in his eye, makes answer that—only it must be kept a profound secret—he is privately of opinion that his master is *too* clever; as clerks say, a thing overdone is ill done; his lord has so much wit that he misuses it; but that is all he can say,—and hush!

'"Why?" quod this yiman, "whereto axe ye me,
God help me so, for he schal never the,
(But I wol nought avowe what I say,
And therfor kep it secré I yow pray)
He is to wys in faith, as I bileve.
Thing that is over-don, it wil nought preve

Aright, as clerkes sein, it is a vice ;
Wherefore in that I holde him lewed and nyce.
For whan a man hath over-greet a witte,
Ful ofte him happeth to mysusen itte :
So doth my lord, and that me greveth sore,
God it amend, I can say now no more."'

The Host then inquires where the Canon lives if that also is not a profound secret, and is told that he rather hides than resides anywhere, lurking in blind alleys, among thieves and vagabonds :—

'" Where dwellen ye, *if it to-telle be?* "
" In the subarbes of a toun," quod ho,
" Lurking in hirnes and in lanes blynde,
Where as these robbours and these thieves lay kynde
Hidden here privy, fearful residence,
As they that dor nought schewen her presence,
So faren we, if I schal say the sothe."'

These graphic whispers of the half-honest, discontented serving-man, encourage the Host to go a little farther :

'" Now," quod oure Ost, " yit let me talke to the
Why artow so discoloured on thy face ? "
" Peter ! " quod he, " God give it harde grace,
I am so used the fuyr to blowe,
That it hath chaunged my colour I trowe ;
I am not wont in no mirour to prie,
But swynke sore, and lerne to multiplie.
We blondren ever, and pouren in the fuyr,
And for al that we faile of oure desir,
For ever we lacken oure conclusioun.
To moche folke we ben illusioun,

And borwe gold, be it a pound or tuo,
Or ten or twelve, or many sommes mo,
And make hem wenen atte leste weye,
That of a pound we conne make tweye.
Yit is it fals; and ay we han good hope
It for to doon, and after it we grope.
But that science is so fer us biforn,
We mowen nought, although we had it sworn,
It overtake, it slyt away so fast;
It wol us make beggers atte last."'

'I am so used to blow the fire under my master's crucibles that my face has got a queer furnace odour about it. We are always pouring stuff into the crucible, and yet nothing comes of it. I have not time to look at myself in a glass, because I work so hard. We go on borrowing money of people, telling them that we can make one pound into two, yet we never hit it, though we go on hoping and groping. The science or knowledge we seek is so far a-head of us that we cannot overtake it, even though we had sworn to do it, and it will make us beggars at last.'

The Canon, seeing all this confidential talk going on, and readily conceiving that his man was relieving his mind of a budget of trouble, begins to draw closer:—

'Whil this Yeman was thus in his talkyng,
This Chanoun drough him ner and herd al thing
Which that this Yiman spak, for suspecciouu
Of mennes speche ever hadde this Chanoun;

* * * * *

By cause of that he gan so neigh to drawe
His Yeman, that he herde al his sawe;

And thus he sayd unto his Yeman tho;
"Hold now thi pees, and spek no wordes mo;
For if thou do, thou shalt it deere abye;
Thow sclaundrest me here in this companye,
And eek discoverest that thou schuldest hide."'

Being always afraid of what men said of him, he had listened to his servant's talk, and now admonishes him to hold his tongue:—'Thou slanderest me in this company, and discoverest what thou shouldst bide.' But the Host, who begins to understand the situation thoroughly, and to feel, along, no doubt, with the remainder of the Pilgrims who have gathered around, that the Canon's Yeman wishes to break with his master and forsake a life of which he is weary, encourages the Yeman to proceed with his disclosures, and tells him not to heed his master's threats a mite. 'No more I do,' says the Yeman; and, seeing he is bent upon talking with the Pilgrims, the Canon rides away. 'Ah,' cries the Yeman, 'he's gone! And I shall never see him again, or get back any of the money he borrowed of me!'

'"Ye," quod oure Ost, "tel on, what so bytyde;
Of alle this thretyng recche the nought a myte."
"In faith," quod he, "no more do I but lite."
And whan this Chanoun seih it wold not be,
But his Yeman wold telle his priveté,
He fledde away for verray sorwe and schame.
"A!" quod the Yeman, "her schal arise game;
Al that I can anoon now wol I telle,
Sin he is goon; the foule feend him quelle!

For never herafter wol I with him meete
For peny ne for pound, I wol byheete.
He that me broughte first unto that game,
He that he deye, sorwe have he and schame!
For it is ernest to me, by my faith;
That fele I wel, what so eny man saith."'

And yet, what with the entanglement of his position with a master who was in the habit of borrowing, through him, large sums of money upon a promise to double them in the crucible, and what with the gambler's spell of the trade, the servant had never been able to quit it:—

'"And yet for al my smert, and al my greef,
For al my sorwe, and labour, and mescheef,
I couthe never leve it in no wise.
Now wolde God my wyt mighte suffise
To tellen al that longeth to that art;
But nathles, yet wil I telle yow part;
Sin that my lord is goon, I wol nought spare,
Such thing as that I knowe, I wol declare.
"With this Chanoun I duelled have seven yer,
And of his science am I never the ner;
Al that I hadde, I have lost therby,
And God wot, so hath many mo than I.
Ther I was wont to be right freisch and gay
Of clothing, and of other good array."'

But now he had to wear a stocking upon his head, because he could not afford a hood:—

'"Now may I were an hose upon myn heed;
And where my colour was bothe freissch and reed,

Now it is wan, and of a leden hewe,
(Who so it useth, sore schal he rewe);
And of my swynk yet blended is myn ye;
* * * * *
That slydynge science had me made so bare,
That I have no good, wher that ever I fare;
And yit I am endetted so therby
Of gold, that I have borwed trewely,
That whil I lyve schal I quite never;
Let every man be war by me for ever.
What maner man that casteth him thereto,
If he continue, I holde his thrift i-do;
So help me God, therby schal he not wynne,
But empte his purs, and *make his wittes thynne.*
And whan he, thurgh his madnes and folye,
Hath lost his owne good in jeupardie,
Than he exciteth other men therto,
To lesse her good, as he himself hath do.
For unto schrewes joy it is and ese
To have here felawes in peyne and desese.'

There is a touch of the truly diabolical in his picture. 'Let every man take warning by me, and shun that sliding science. If any one takes it up, his fortunes are done for. He will empty his purse and starve his brains. And then when he has ruined himself, he will entice other men to risk and lose their property, just as he has been doing. For to malicious people it is joy and ease to entrap their fellows into pain and *dis*-ease." I think I have read that Edward III. was bitten by the alchemic mania, and that he lost money by it—which, certainly, he could ill

afford to do. It does not follow that Chaucer himself took the infection—he was almost too great a humourist to be swindled in *that* way; yet there is no telling what his poverty may have driven him to, or how it may have predisposed him to believe in the pretensions of some one of the craft; and the very marked manner in which the Canon is shown up, to say nothing of the way in which he is *flung* into the story, as if he were an after-thought, has almost a personal look with it. As to the knowledge of the technical terms of alchemy, I lay no stress upon that, for Chaucer could pick up any knowledge that lay in his path, and use it whenever he chose; but certainly there *is* the knowledge, for the Yeman goes on to give some details of the manner in which the alchemists exercised their elvish craft:—

> 'I wol speke of oure werk.
> Whan we ben ther as we schul exercise
> Oure elvyssh craft, we seme wonder wyse.'

But he says it is not very easy, because the terms in use in the craft are strange, and such as clerks use. He blows the fire under the pot, in which there are perhaps five or six ounces of silver, with orpiment, burnt bones, iron slags, salt, pepper, and what not—all mixed up together. Then the vessel is covered with glass, which is joined to the rim of the former with clay, so that no air can get in. He is a 'lewed' (unlearned man), so that it is difficult for him to speak of these things, but he will try:—

'There is also ful many another thing,
That is to oure craft appertenyng,
Though I by ordre hem here reherse ne can
Bycause that I am a lewed man,
Yet wil I telle hem, as they come to mynde,
Though I ne conne nought sette hem in her kynde;
As bol armoniak, verdegres, boras;
And sondry vessels maad of erthe and glas,
. . . . . Oure descensories,
Viols, croslets, and sublimatories,
Concurbites, and alembikes eeke,
And othere suche, deere y-nough a leeke,
Nat needith it to rehersen hem alle;
Watres rubifying, and boles galle,
Arsnek, sal armoniak, and brimstoon.
And herbes couthe I telle eek many oon.'

There is much more of the same sort, some of it not being quite cleanly, and then we come to the four spirits, and the seven bodies!

'I wol you telle as was me taught also
The foure spirits, and the bodies seven
By ordre, as ofte herd I my lord neven.
The firste spirit quyksilver called is;
The secound orpiment; the thridde I wis
Sal armoniac, and the ferthe bremstoon.
The bodies seven, eek, lo hem heer anoon.
Sol gold is, and Luna silver we threpe;
Mars yren, Mercurie quyksilver we clepe;
Saturnus leed, and Jubitur is tyn,
And Venus coper.'

Not only does the incessant blowing of the furnace

over this kind of hash make the servant's complexion of a lead colour, it makes the chief performer unsavoury, as might be expected:—

'And evermore, wher that ever they goon,
Men may hem knowe by smel of brimstoon; . . . . .
That though a man fro hem a myle be,
The savour wol infecte him, trusteth me.
Lo, thus by smellyng and by thred-bar array,
If that men list, this folk they knowe may.'

And when they are asked why they go so ill dressed, they say that if men knew their 'science' they would kill them. There is an obvious paradox here, and the Yeman sees the joke, for he exclaims sarcastically,—

'Lo, thus this folk betrayen innocence!'

Anon the pot bursts, and the room is full of splinters. Then there is a discussion as to the cause of the failure:—

'Every man chyt, and halt him evel apayde.
Som sayd it was long on the fuyr-makyng;
Some sayde nay, it was on the blowyng;
(Than was I ferd, for that was myn office).
'Straw!' quod the thridde, 'ye been lewed and nyce,
It was nought tempred as it oughte be.'
'Nay,' quoth the ferthe, 'stynt and herkne me;
Bycause oure fuyr was nought y-maad of beech,
That is the cause, and other noon.'

'Long on the fire-making' means, of course, 'along

of' the fire-making; a genuine old English locution, though now only in use among 'lewed' people. The criticism of the fourth person here, that the accident happened because the fire was not made of beech-wood, is, even if only a joke of Chaucer, exactly in the spirit of the mediæval belief in occult and specific qualities everywhere. The story ends by the master-alchemist ordering the servant to sweep up the 'mullock' or mess (the word may still be heard in country places) and gather up the remaining bits of metal, in order that he may begin all over again.

The curious part of the matter is the prevalence of this pursuit—so nearly akin to the black arts—among the clergy. Above all, it is odd, as seems to have been the case, or as is at all events suggested by a fact or two in point, that cathedral canons should have had a special weakness for the ruinous hobby. The Yeman goes on to say,—

> Ther is a chanoun of religioun
> Amonges us, wold infecte al a toun,
> Though it as gret were as was Ninive,
> Rome, Alisaundre, Troye, or other thre.
> His sleight and his infinite falsnesse
> Ther couthe no man writen, as I gesse,
> Though that he mighte lyven a thousand yeer;
> Of al this world of falsheed nys his peer,
> For in his termes he wol him so wynde,
> And speke his wordes in so sleygh a kynde,
> Whan he comune schal with eny wight,
> That he wil make him dote anoon right,

But it a feend be, as him selven is.
Ful many a man hath he bygiled er this,
And wol, if that he lyve may a while;
And yet men rytle and goon ful many a myle
Him for to seeke, and have his aqueintaunce,
Nought knowyng of his false governaunce.
And if yow list to geve me audience,
I wol it telle here in youre presence.
But, worschipful chanouns religious,
Ne demeth not that I sclaundre youre hous.'

'There is a canon out of our number who is so full of sleight of wit and falsehood, and so clever at winding a man in his terms (getting round people) that he would infect a whole town with his own dishonest mania, and make a man dote upon the idea of turning things into gold, unless the man happen to be a devil like himself. He has already beguiled a good many persons, and he will beguile yet more if he lives. But worshipful canons must not think I wish to slander their order.' Now the very disavowal carries with it a reflection upon the order. And before concluding his prologue, the Yeman thinks it necessary to give this piece of advice:—

'If ye wol herkene me,
If any Judas in youre covent be,
Remewe him by tyme, I yow rede,
If schame or los may causen eny drede.
And beth no thing displesed, I you pray,
But in this caas herkeneth what I say.'

'Take my advice, and if there is a Judas in any

of your own convents remove him betimes, unless you court shame and ruin.' Even allowing for the probable presence of some personal feeling, at first or at second-hand, in Chaucer's handling of those clerics who were given to alchemy, there is certainly enough here to raise a presumption that the pursuit was a frequent one with certain members of the religious orders.

III. There is no wonder, of course, that the clerical mind in the middle ages should have turned readily to a baseless study, for, even in presence of the great name of Roger Bacon, we cannot help confessing that there was no such thing as science, and that the great name of Aristotle was chiefly of use in propping up what he would have made short work with if he had been living. It shows, if proof were wanting, how slow and capricious, or at least incalculable, is the movement of human progress, that the example and influence of Roger Bacon should have counted for so little. Hallam and other writers have pointed out striking resemblances between passages in his writings and those of his successors of the sixteenth century, which make it clear that he had a truly scientific mind, and was really prepared to move forward in the path of interrogating Nature. No doubt experimental philosophy was, later than Bacon's time, too often mere solemn trifling, and the apparatus available at the time must have been rude in the extreme. We

may gather that from the Yeman's account of his master's laboratory. But, probably, the studious men of the age had as much apparatus as they could have used with effect, and, in any case, the real reason why science seems to have stopped short at Roger Bacon appears to be that there is a law (to apply a word, the applicability of which is, in my opinion, doubtful) of progress, by which the general development of the scientific spirit (not necessarily the appearance of a great man of scientific intelligence) follows, at a long interval, in the wake of a moral-polemic development. It may seem idle, and I believe it is so, to talk of a 'law,' when all we have before us to judge from is one poor series of facts; but those facts do really appear pretty legible. First of all, we have romanticism and the fetichistic religion of the Middle Ages. Absolute authority in the Church, and absolute authority in the secular power. An attempt to amalgamate these two. Failure of the attempt, and evident signs of a bifurcation of the spiritual and the temporal. A schism or revolt of the secular elements in life, in the shape, first of poetry and woman-worship, and then in the fight for freedom in its successive stages, the baronial conflicts, the rebellion of the labourers, the claims of light and truth for all, the shifting of the ground of authority in opinion (to which I have already referred). Meanwhile the burgher, or tradesman and merchant class, are rising in importance, and trading interests insist

upon *convenience* as the law of life. The free discussion of personal rights, and the perpetual bending of the mind to the easiest ways of doing things, tend to generate the moods in which man investigates facts, and endeavours to yoke them to his purposes; and so, in ways which we cannot follow, a new spirit, namely, the spirit of inquiry addressed to the raw material of human life, is slowly generated. Bacon is born—the charter of science is unrolled, and its progress begins. It will not do to affirm that the quibbling scholasticism of the thirteenth century, and the desperate raking after the impossible or the useless possible, which so enraged the Canon's Yeman, were necessary stages in the progress of humanity—all we can say is, that they were, in fact, stages through which the human mind did pass on its way to a certain goal. And the spirit of religious insurgence has so much to do with the spirit in which science is loved *for itself*, and pursued without fear of consequences, that we have only to bring together in our minds three such figures as those of the alchemical Canon (and churchmen of the type were, it is pretty clear, very numerous) Galileo and Wickliffe. The alchemical churchman was not properly scientific—he did not love or pursue science for its own sake, but for a mean end,—the end, namely, of transmuting all other metals into gold. Wickliffe was not a man of science, but he was a lover of free thought, and the attitude of his mind towards the religion of the day was scientific. Galileo was a man

of science, and he came frankly and inevitably into collision with the authority which Wickliffe did so much to weaken by attacking it on its irrational, or unscientific side. We may note, in our own day, another form of the struggle of science with authority. It is within the memory of living persons that geologists were denounced as infidels for propounding the idea that the world was more than six thousand years old; but with respect to this particular science a process of accommodation or mutual explanation has been steadily going on, and at the present moment it is only very ignorant or very stupid people who think religion is in danger when a new fact that cannot be reconciled with what some man or set of men believes is alleged with a reasonable offer of proof. The true scientific spirit was, indeed, totally impossible in the middle ages, except as a thing to be cowed and persecuted; for the Roman Catholic Church was supposed to hold the keys of *a* knowledge to which all other knowledge must conform itself. It is a strange world! If it were not for the apparent irreverence, one might say that most good things happen by historic fluking! The men who did most to burn the idea of right and freedom of belief and of teaching into the human mind were the early Christian martyrs. But this meant only fidelity to Christ, and there were then no beliefs to care for except religious beliefs. Then the mediæval Church re-enacts the cruelties of the first persecutors, and maltreats those who read fidelity to Christ with

different eyes from its own. It sets up the type which we recognise as the mediæval clerk as the representative of all possible knowledge. Then come religious and political revolt, and authority is stultified on every hand; and, in course of time, the same freedom as that which was once claimed only for religious belief and propagandism, is tacitly extended to all belief and propagandism whatever. This result is not yet quite realized; let us not equivocate with ourselves, there are large tracts of freedom yet to be reclaimed from the spirit of authority; but the work proceeds, and we will not forget those *whom we know* to have been among its greatest helpers. I say, those whom we know in that great and beneficent capacity, because it is one of the bitterest thoughts that arise, when we turn the pages which record the brutal triumphs of authority over the human mind, that no human eye can tell how much it may have crushed out in silence and darkness that would have helped us if it had been suffered to do its work.

Yet, let us hasten to recall the faithless word; can we believe in a Divine Will inscrutably at work in history, and not believe that every sincere thought and work and wish, however brief and however soon quenched, has helped towards every good result that to-day's sun shines upon? Nay, more, can we refuse to believe that every such offering laid upon the grand altar will some day be rescued from the darkness into

which it may have been swept, and justified by fire from heaven itself?

IV. If the polemico-moral insurgence of the time of Chaucer could be represented under any one name, that name would, by general consent, be John Wickliffe; and to Wickliffe we will now, for a short time, turn our eyes.

Neither of the pictures of characters and vocation in the Canterbury Tales has been more heartily admired than that of the Poor Parson, 'of a town' or village. It is so simple and Saxon that it needs no comment or glossary; though we might note, in passing the *grave* use of the word 'snub,' which has since been so degraded. A 'spiced conscience' is, of course, a nice sophisticated conscience:—

'A good man was ther of religioun,
And was a pore Persoun of a toun;
But riche he was of holy thought and werk.
He was also a lerned man, a clerk
That Cristes gospel truly wolde preche;
His parischens devoutly wold he teche.
Benigne he was, and wondur diligent,
And in adversité ful pacient;
And such he was i-proved ofte sithes.
Ful loth were him to curse for his tythes;
But rather wolde he geven out of dowte,
Unto his pore parisschens aboute,
Of his offrynge, and eek of his substaunce.
He cowde in litel thing han suffisance.

Thus we learn that the poor parson had ofttimes (sithes) proved himself patient; would rather forgive his tithes to his poor parishioners than press for them; and, being himself satisfied with but little, he was, though poor, able to help others:—

'Wyd was his parisch, and houses fer asondur,
But he ne lafte not for reyn ne thondur,
In sicknesse ne in meschief to visite
The ferrest in his parische, moche and lite,
Uppon his feet, and in his hond a staf.
This noble ensample unto his scheep he gaf,
That ferst he wroughte, and after that he taughte,
Out of the gospel he tho wordes caughte,
And this figure he addid yit therto,
That if golde ruste, what schulde yren doo?
For if a prest be foul, on whom we truste,
No wondur is a lewid man to ruste.'

His parish was a large one, the houses being far apart, but bad weather never prevented him visiting his afflicted people, high and low (moche and lite), up to the very boundaries of his cure, and he used to walk all the way. He *did* first and preached afterwards, so that he gave his sheep a 'noble ensample.' If gold itself rust, what can we expect of iron? If a priest, in whom we trust, lead a foul life, what can be looked for from 'lewid' or secular people? I omit here a coarse metaphor:—

'He sette not his benefice to huyre,
Ne lefte his scheep encombred in the myre,

And ran to Londone, unto seynte Poules,
To seeken him a chaunterie for soules,
Or with a brethurhede be withholde;
But dwelte at hoom, and kepte wel his folde,
So that the wolf ne made it not myscarye.
He was a schepperde and no mercenarie;
And though he holy were, and vertuous,
He was to senful man nought dispitous,
Ne of his speche daungerous ne digne,
But in his teching discret and benigne.
To drawe folk to heven by fairnesse,
By good ensample, was his busynesse:
But it were eny persone obstinat,
What so he were of high or lowe estat.
Him wolde he snybbe scharply for the nones.
A bettre preest I trowe ther nowher non is.
He waytud after no pompe ne reverence,
Ne maked him a spiced conscience,
But Cristes lore, and his apostles twelve,
He taught and ferst he folwed it himselve.'

He did not set his benefice to hire, or leave his flock to shift for itself while he was in London looking after his own interests. Yet, though he was a shepherd, not a mercenary, and a virtuous, holy man, he was not untender to sinners, or proud or repelling (daungerous) in his speech. He was both discreet (not to give offence) and benignant in his teaching, and his whole business in life was to draw folks to heaven by 'fairness' and good example. (It is impossible not to be reminded here of Goldsmith's —

'Allured to brighter worlds and led the way.')

But if an ill-conducted person were obstinate in wrong-doing, this poor parson would sharply snub him, whether he was rich or poor; (which, again, irresistibly recalls a point made by Fielding in his character of Parson Adams). He never danced attendance upon pomp and pride, but first followed and then taught the lore of Christ and His twelve Apostles.

It has been said that this is a portrait of Wickliffe, and Chaucer has himself been called a Wickliffite; but there is no proof that he was entitled to bear that name. There is, in the meanwhile, every reason that the nature of the case admits of, for judging Chaucer to have been a man incapable of such high degrees of faith and moral steadfastness as we must inevitably associate with the work and career of Wickliffe. Is it conceivable that the author of the Canterbury Tales could, under any circumstances, have become a martyr? Could Shakspeare? I confess, I cannot conceive it of either. But the moral intensity of men like Wickliffe, and still more their *faith* (*i.e.* their reliance, avouched by their conduct, upon unseen aid), are essentially heroic; their whole meaning is, 'This course of conduct upon which I have entered is dictated to me by the Divine Spirit; its consequences are no concern of mine; and, if death awaits me, I am ready to die.' This is not a spirit which finds a welcome in the most cultivated circles of modern times; but it is undeniably the spirit of the Founder of Christianity,

and of all the martyrs and heroes that ever lived. I certainly do not believe that the man who wrote the slippery prologue to the Canterbury Tales was capable even of sympathising with the high heroic spirit, much less of sharing it. Assuredly, he could only have had a superficial understanding of the man Wickliffe, and there is, in reality, not much reason for raising the question at all; for there is nothing particularly Wickliffian in any portion of his works. As for the Poor Parson standing for Wickliffe himself,—it is just possible, of course: only Wickliffe was an Oxford Professor, and not a poor priest, but Rector of Lutterworth; a man quite capable of holding his own; occupying a distinguished position in his day; befriended by John of Gaunt; and with all the instincts, not of a quiet country parson, but of a moral and theological polemic.

It has been said, indeed, that Wickliffe was not a Protestant, in the usual sense of the word; that, though he protested, he did not revolt: that he was rather what must be called a liberal Roman Catholic—not so very unlike our own Dr. Newman, perhaps. It is, however, difficult to conceive how he could have remained, otherwise than nominally, a Roman Catholic, after the famous schism of the Papacy, which followed upon the death of Gregory XI., which took place in 1378, the very same year as that in which Wickliffe had to defend himself from charges of heresy before the papal commis-

sioners at Lambeth Palace. It was, of course, possible to remain a believer in all the doctrines of his Church, which he had believed up to that time; but he could not yield the allegiance of a subject to two popes at once—to Urban VI. at Rome, and Clement VII. at Avignon. The part which Wickliffe took with regard to the consequences of this 'schism of the West,' was that of vehemently rebuking the campaign in which the adherents of Pope Urban—who was the recognised Pope in England—at last engaged. Urban succeeded in inducing the English to send out an army, intended to disroot Pope Clement at Avignon; and the expedition actually set forth, though it was countermanded by Edward III., and did much mischief in Flanders. It is difficult to read Wickliffe's appeals upon this subject, and call him even a *liberal* Catholic. He calls 'Antichrist, putting thousands to death for his own ends, a ravening wolf, in contrast with the good Shepherd, who laid down His life for the sheep; and declares that the help of Christ, the Head of the Church, is made manifest, in that He hath cloven the head of Antichrist in twain, and permitted the two parts to fight against each other.'

On the whole, we shall not misrepresent the position of Wickliffe, if we say that he began by being a comparatively moderate reformer in the Church to which he belonged; that his disapprobation of the doctrine, and practice of that Church, deepened as he

advanced in years, and as different circumstances happened to place him in that attitude of hostility which is favourable to criticism; and that he ended by being, in all the most important particulars, a Protestant.

There is no doubt whatever, on the very face of the evidence, that the spirit of doubt in theological matters was active in the days of Wickliffe, far beyond the limits of what we mean by the word Protestantism. In the 'Vision of Piers Ploughman,' this is expressly stated. The seer informs us, that he had heard high men eating at table lay faults upon the Father of us all:—

'I have y-herd heighe men,
Etynge at the table,
Carpen, *as thei clerkes were*,
Of Crist, and of hise myghtes,
And leyden fautes upon the fader
That formede us alle.
And *carpen agein clerkes*
Crabbede wordes . . . .'

Why did the Lord let the serpent into Paradise?

'Why wolde oure Saveour suffre
Swich (sad) a worm in his blisse,
That bigiled the womman
And the man after,
Thorough whiche wiles and wordes
Thei went to helle,
And all hir seed, for hir synn,
The same deeth (death) suffrede.'
Here lyeth your lore.

'Thise lordes gynneth dispute,
Of that the clerkes us kenneth (assure us of)
Of Crist by the Gospel . . .
Why shold we, that now ben,
For the workes of Adam
Roten and to rende ?
Reson wolde it nevere.'

This is one of the most interesting records of the time. The author of the Vision is shocked that lay-lords and great people should discuss religious matters as if they were clerks, and 'carp crabbed words against clerks,' and say that 'reason would not suffer' that which the clerks taught. Here, once more, is the old opposition, the old-new conflict, between the *sacerdos* and the layman, and the presence of scepticism in the upper classes at a time of political insurgence (more or less fluctuating) among the lower. It was one of the charges brought against Wickliffe, that he not only taught damnable religious falsehood; but that he inculcated or insinuated the doctrine that 'dominion is founded in grace.' But the doctrine does not appear by any means to have fixed upon Wickliffe as a working or practical tenet. It is one thing to say that only a good man is entitled to rule others—and it is true—but it is quite another thing to say that, as a rule, a bad man in authority must be disobeyed or deposed. The relation between the Protestantism of Wickliffe and the spirit of political insurgence, when the insurgence is just, is easy to see. Wickliffe taught

the value of the individual soul, took him out of the hands of a clerical corporation and its functionaries, and rehabilitated his personal responsibility to God. As it happened, there *was* a tide of political insurgence setting in just then, and the Papacy was stultified by the schism of the West. As in the papal institution religion had given up its natural spiritual weapon, and used that of the temporal power, namely, physical force, it exposed itself to a collision with men's consciences. If the Church imposed upon men an error which they believed God forbade them to assent to, and the civil power burnt them when, in God's name, they refused assent,—they learnt, in the most decisive form, the lesson that resistance to authority may not only be a duty, but, possibly, the very highest duty a man can fulfil. This is the lesson learnt by every martyr, and, preached from the stake or the cold shadow of persecution, it is the lesson which is of all lessons the most threatening to tyranny in any and every shape. A country in which religion is every man's own business first of all, and the Church a free fraternity for mutual help alone, will always be politically free.

V. Wickliffe, who (without himself knowing the full scope of what he did) did so much to forward in Europe generally as well as in his own country, this idea of a free Church in a free state, was born on the banks of the Tees, in Yorkshire; was a student at Queen's

College, Oxford, in the middle of the fourteenth century, became Professor of Divinity there, later on; gave up his chair, rather than omit the Protestant element in his teaching; made the acquaintance of John of Gaunt, at Bruges, whither he had gone as a deputation to the papal envoys in 1374; was twice promoted—once to a prebendary, and once to the incumbency of Lutterworth, in Leicestershire, by the King himself; spent his last years at Lutterworth, and died there in December 1384, aged sixty. This was not a long life, and Wickliffe furnishes us with another example of the immense prolific energy of the foremost Englishmen of that age; besides reminding us once more how much human energy can do *without* such appliances and helps as modern civilization appears to think essential. In his days printing was not, and mail-coaches were not, yet Wickliffe was a diligent preacher and reformer, a man of the people all his life, and produced, besides, an immense number of controversial writings. It has been computed that his works would make four or five volumes, folio, in print. And he was not only a theologian, he was a schoolman, as indeed every theologian of that time would necessarily be; since nobody could deny him scholarship, his works found readers all over Europe—at least all over central Europe among his fellow-scholars — though it is scarcely easy for *us* to conceive how a man's writings could circulate very extensively without the help of printing. We do not realise the activity of the text-

writer or copyist of those days; but he was a very busy and effective person, whether as a free volunteer, or as paid for his labour; and, as a matter of fact, books did circulate even in the fourteenth century, by hundreds in the first issues, and by thousands, perhaps, afterwards: for everywhere there were copyists, and perhaps almost everywhere persons who did the work of the modern publisher. To the polemicial labours of Wickliffe must, of course, be added his translation of the Bible from the Vulgate—an immense work for a man, otherwise busy, to accomplish. From his time the work, which paused upon the Reformation, was never wholly dropped, either in England, or on the Continent, in spite of the reaction which followed his death. That he did not meet the martyrdom which his own words give reason to believe he expected, we know. But forty years after his death his remains were taken up and burnt. The ashes were thrown into the river Swift; and we all remember how Fuller says 'the Swift carried them into the Avon, Avon into the Severn, Severn into the narrow seas, then to the main ocean; and thus the ashes of Wycliffe are the emblem of his doctrine, which now is dispersed all the world over.'

Wickliffe was, in his time, the most striking embodiment of the new or didactic tendency concerning which something has already been said. To affirm, or discover, or re-affirm moral and religious truth as the basis of conduct was what counted for much in the

Protestant spirit, and it was directly opposed to the Roman Catholic or mediæval tendency proper, which referred both faith and conduct to the arbitration of a personal authority. It was also opposed, as it still shows itself opposed, in the modern Puritan or Evangelical type, to art, and even to emotion considered as a beautifier or fertiliser of life. Hence it was not, and is not favourable in itself, as disclosed in its strongest types, even to devotion proper. But we must read with some tenderness and reserve of construction the writings of a religious reformer in the fourteenth century; and, when he declares, as Wickliffe did, that of a priest's offices, his preaching was of more importance than his praying, we must read it with some reference to the depreciation which the function of preaching had in his days undergone at the hands of the lazy mass-priests, and the friars, who were so many of them the mere bagmen of secular stories, instead of the diligent preachers of religious truth and moral duties. Some of the stories of Chaucer's Monk were 'sacred' (*e.g.* 'Lucifer,' 'Samson,' 'Adam'); but, though he half proposes to narrate the life of Saint Edward, he deals mostly in 'tragedies' of Julius Cæsar, and the like. When the Host banters him—

> 'This worthy monk took al in pacience,
> And saide, "I wol doon al my diligence,
> Als fer as souneth into honesté,

To telle yow a tale, or tuo or thre;
And if you lust to herken hider-ward,
I wil yow say the lif of seint Edward,
Or elles first tregedis will I yow telle,
Of which I have an hundred in my celle.
Tregedis is to sayn a certeyn storie,
As olde bookes maken us memorie,
Of hem that stood in greet prosperité,
And is y-fallen out of heigh degré
Into miserie, and endith wrecchedly."'

There was no reason why a monk should tell classical stories, especial 'tragedies,' but the tendency of the minor ecclesiastics to degenerate into gestours, or reciters of romances, was one which was sure to awaken all the resistance and dislike of men of the Wickliffe stamp.

The story of John Huss and Jerome of Prague, though contemporary in date, does not belong to Chaucer's England. The martyrdom of Lord Cobham lies beyond the limits of my date. And so, of course, does the rising, or tumult, or 'affair' of St. Giles', which is connected with his name, and which was used as a decisive pretext for that identification of Lollardism with civil rebellion which had gone on throughout the life of Wickliffe. Incredible as it may appear, the right of sanctuary was, by an act of Parliament, now denied to any one convicted of reading the Scriptures in English, though it was allowed to other crimes as usual. Thus, headed by the clergy, set in that reaction which had so cruel an effect upon the

fortunes of freedom in England, and of what always flourishes or fades with freedom—namely, literature. It has been said that Chaucer was like a fine warm spring day, after which come bitter frosts. It is true with regard to English literature, and with regard to religion it may almost be said that Wickliffe was like a day in early summer. In range of vision he seems to me to have been superior to Luther, and his physiognomy discloses a character of the high heroic type.

No reference to Wickliffe would be complete unless it were accompanied by a copy of Dr. Vaughan's interesting paragraph about the last claimant of the name, and (in any degree, by however remote a reflection) the honours, of the great reformer:—

'We have also ourselves learnt, that less than forty years since there was an old man living in the parish of Wycliffe, who, though in humble condition, claimed to be a descendant of the Wycliffe family. He was tall, of good presence, and those who knew him often spoke of the strong resemblance between his features and those given in the portrait of the great reformer. The Tunstalls so far acknowledged the claims of this person as to assign him a small pension. He carried himself high, though poor; never put his hand to common labour. His turn was towards mechanics. He was the great regulator of time to the neighbourhood. He laid a sort of claim to the supervision of all clocks and watches, which he adjusted, repaired,

and kept to the hour, by means of two watches of his own, which he always wore about with him, one in each pocket of his waistcoat, for the purpose. In this capacity he made his periodical calls upon his friends, had his gossip, took his refreshment, and then, with some stateliness of manner, bowed them good day.'

Before passing on, I may just add, with reference to the notion,—evidently, for other reasons, erroneous, —that the poor Parson was meant as a portrait of Wickliffe, that the absence of any traits of the man's person appears at once to stamp it for an ideal portrait. Chaucer is usually so minutely personal in his descriptions, giving us eyes, nose, mouth, limbs, and carriage, that the absence of *features* in a portrait is almost sufficient to prove that the poet is generalising. The same remark applies to the Knight, who is expressly described as 'perfect,' or typical, like the Parson.

VI. The Clerk proper, whom Chaucer has made a type of, is from Oxford. He is thin, threadbare, and solemn. His pride is to have about twenty books, bound in red and black, on a shelf at his bed's head. *Though* he was a 'philosopher,' he had but little gold in his coffers, *i. e.*, he was not an alchemist. All the money his friends gave him he spent in books, praying for the souls of the givers! His talk is what we should now call pedantic, but such as in the fourteenth century was proper to his character. That he should 'gladly learn and gladly teach,' is, of course, the characteristic of a scholar; as

to be 'lean as a rake' is that of a *poor* scholar's horse. The word 'scolay' is one which we may, perhaps, justly regret having allowed to drop out of usage. In this picture of a poor scholar there is only one humorous touch—namely, that he would 'busily' begin to pray for the souls' of such as gave him money. One sees his lean figure, and hears his hurried Latin benediction!

'A clerk ther was of Oxenford also,
That unto logik hadde longe i-go.
Al so lene was his hors as is a rake,
And he was not right fat, I undertal
But lokede holwe, and thereto soburly.
Ful thredbare was his overest courtepy,
For he hadde nought geten him yit a benefice,
Ne was not worthy to haven an office.
For him was lever have at his beddes heed
Twenty bookes, clothed in blak and reed,
Of Aristotil, and of his philosophie,
Then robus riche, or fithul, or sawtrie.
But al though he were a philosophre,
Yet hadde he but litul gold in cofre;
But al that he might of his frendes hente,
On bookes and his lernyng he it spente,
And busily gan for the soules pray
Of hem that gaf him wherewith to scolay.
Of studie tooke he most cure and heede.
Not oo word spak he more than was neede;
Al that he spak it was of heye prudence,
And schort and quyk, and ful of gret sentence.
Sownynge in moral manere was his speche,
And gladly wolde he lerne and gladly teche.'

The colours are perhaps laid on rather thickly here, and we seem to have in this clerk another *typical* figure, in whom a number of traits belonging to different people are aggregated. That he did not speak a word more than was necessary, that what he did say was of 'high prudence,' 'sounding in moral manner,' and 'short and quicke and of great meaning' (sentence),—are touches which savour of pedantry perhaps. I must request the reader to notice the remark that this scholar preferred books to rich robes, fiddle, or psaltery,—a point to which I will return in a moment.

Another specimen of the Clerk,—who is not, however, a 'scholar,'—comes in for a word or two of notice in a previous page. He is above all things a gallant and a dandy,—'swell,' indeed, is the only word that suits him. His clothes are all of the newest 'get' or fashion. His tunic is small and fits him close, being made of fine cloth, too. His hose are red, and his shoes, like his tunic, gored. His surplice is white: his complexion rosy, and his eyes goose-grey. He is a dancer, a ballad-monger, a tavern-haunter, a barber, a conveyancer. His hair is curled, bright as gold, and spread abroad like a fan. He makes sheep's-eyes at the pretty women in church, as he censes them, and never takes offerings from *them*,—which must be an exaggeration:—

> 'Now ther was of that chirche a parisch clerk,
> The which that was i-cleped Absolon.

Crulle was his heer, and as the gold it schon,
And strowted as a fan right large and brood;
Ful streyt and evene lay his jolly schood.
His rode was reed, his eyghen gray as goos,
With Powles wyndowes corven on his schoos.
In hosen reed he went ful fetusly.
I-clad he was ful small and propurly,
Al in a kirtel of a fyn wachet,
Schapen with goores in the newe get.
And thereupon he had a gay surplys,
As whyt as is the blosme upon the rys.
A mery child he was, so *God* me save;
Wel couthe he lete blood, and clippe and schave,
And make a chartre of lond and acquitaunce.
In twenty maners he coude skip and daunce,
After the scole of Oxenforde tho,
And with his legges casten to and fro;
And pleyen songes on a small rubible;
Ther-to he sang som tyme a lowde quynyble.
And as wel coude he pleye on a giterne.
In al the toun nas brewhous ne taverne
That he ne visited with his solas,
Ther as that any gaylard tapster was . . . .
This Absolon, that joly was and gay,
Goth with a senser on the holy day,
Sensing the wyves of the parisch fast;
And many a lovely look on hem he cast,
And namely on this carpenteres wyf;
To loke on hire him thought a mery lyf;
Sche was so propre, sweete, and licorous.
I dar wel sayn, if sche had ben a mous,
And he a cat, he wold hir hent anoon.
This parisch clerk, this joly Absolon,
Hath in his herte such a love longyng,

'That of no wyf ne took he noon offryng;
For curtesy, he seyde, he wolde noon.'

Sometimes, as we have already seen,

'To shewe his lightness and maistry
He playeth Herod on a scaffold hye.'

And he goes out on the moonlight nights, to serenade the wives and daughters of the townsfolks!

Now here we have, undoubtedly, a picture drawn from the life. *This* Oxford scholar could play on a couple of instruments, and he could skip and dance *after the school of Oxford.* We can well imagine that in these times, when the means of supervising a number of young men could not be great, and when the colleges — not a century old, I suppose (though there had been schools at Oxford immemorial) — were rough and crude in the working of their machinery, a great number out of hundreds of young men would be gallants. Chaucer has, with his usual true instinct, pitched upon the two figures which are most truly representative of the University life of his time,—the poor scholar, of whom there seem to have been great numbers at Oxford, and the singing, playing dandy. The mention of the musical instruments in both cases is striking, for one of the points which arise in the Rev. H. Anstey's book on mediæval Oxford is that in the college documents of the time musical instruments frequently occur in the inventories of the scholars' furniture.

VII. What the students learnt at Oxford in the time of Chaucer is another question, and one too large for my modest design. Hume says that in the middle ages at Oxford they learnt bad Latin and worse logic. This was unprofitable occupation for the thirty thousand scholars (!) who are said to have been students there, before the Black Death reduced the numbers and scattered those that remained. But Oxford in those days was, pretty much a rabble — not to speak it disrespectfully — of youths in separate schools, many of them having no design to study, and only coming to the university town for the sake of companionship and free living. That Aristotle, misconceived, perhaps in the majority of cases, was in the ascendant we know, and we know that the seven 'Arts' of mediæval scholarship were grammar, logic, rhetoric, music, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy. But, whatever was the value of the teaching of the time, judged from our point of view, it is certain that one characteristic of the middle ages was the frequency of endowments, great and small, for educational purposes. One effect of the ecclesiastical vow of poverty was that the ideas of scholarship, considered as a *sacred* thing, and that of being poor, were naturally associated in people's minds, and to the more or less wealthy it became one of the most simple and most accepted ways of honouring the Church, and helping the State, to found or endow schools, or to provide for poor scholars. Mr. Anstey has referred to a very curious form of endow-

ment,—if endowment it can be called,—it consisted in lending money to poor scholars upon some pledge,—a dagger, a furred hood, or a piece of plate,—the pledge to be returned upon payment of the money. One very striking figure of the time of Chaucer must not be omitted while we are upon this subject,—the figure of a man who founded and endowed a college at Oxford, but whose name is more intimately associated with another great foundation.

It is an obvious remark that more of the spirit of the middle ages, and the feudal system in particular, lingers in our great public schools than anywhere else. Fagging is, of course, purely a feudal institution, the fagger being the lord and the faggee the vassal.

The oldest of the great public schools of England is that of Winchester, that venerable city over which broods the very air of middle-age romance. King Arthur had a castle here, in Camelot. Here Guy of Warwick cut off Colbrand's head. Here, for more than three hundred years, was the court and capital of England. In the days of Richard II—'In those days,' writes Froissart, 'there reigned in England a priest called William of Wykeham, and this William of Wykeham was so much in favour with the King of England that'—and the chronicler runs off into a parody of a well-known passage in the fourth gospel—'everything was done by him, and nothing was done without him.' This great man built St. Mary's College,

Winchester (as he rebuilt Windsor Castle for the king); but it was not William of Wykeham who made Winchester a seat of learning. In the grey traditionary distance, we dimly descry at Winchester the sons of great kings sitting in their boyhood at the feet of great clerks at Winchester. There, it is said, St. Swithin taught Alfred, and Archbishop Alfric, writing the life of Athelwold (who was said to have been trained at Winchester), describes himself more than four hundred years before William of Wykeham as 'Wintonensis alumnus.' It is another curious instance of the manner in which classicisms and Christianity were hashed up together in the mediæval mind into something like one half-cognate mythology, that just as it was said a temple to Diana had once existed on the site of St. Paul's, so a temple to Apollo was said to have preceded Winchester Abbey. Wykeham himself was educated in Winchester, at the school which is said to have stood on a portion of the ground on which he afterwards built his college. William of Wykeham, whose secular name was Longe, was the child of John Longe, yeoman, and Sibyl, who was of good descent. Sir Nicholas Uvedale, lord of the manor of Wykeham and constable of Winchester Castle, took a fancy to the bright energetic boy, and educated him at his own charge. He is said to have studied at Oxford for a few years, but this is denied on apparently good authority; and the story runs that his want of the high academic culture being thrown in his teeth on his being made a bishop, he made answer that he knew his

own unworthiness, but would supply that which himself lacked by a brood of more scholars than all the bishops of England had ever shown before. In his youth he gained great credit by some architectural works, which he carried out for Sir Nicholas Uvedale; and when only three or four-and-twenty he went to court, and, being appointed surveyor of the works at a shilling a-day, he planned and rebuilt Windsor Castle. He was evidently a man of great energy. He built Queensborough Castle, 'for the strength of the realm and the refuge of the inhabitants;' and we willingly believe that, at Winchelsea and some other places of consequence on the same line of coast, his vigorous hand and ingenious brain were engaged in the task of fortification. Edward III. was delighted with him, and the number of offices to which he was appointed by the King is hinted in the words just quoted from Froissart. He is said to have been perhaps the greatest pluralist that ever lived. He was made Bishop of Winchester in the year 1366; only, to understand the importance of the preferment, we must think of the dignity of the Winchester of the middle ages; and then, in 1367, the king made him Lord Chancellor. In the meanwhile the great movements within and without the Church, one of whose strongest currents ran violently towards a separation of the secular and the spiritual, had been gathering force and volume; and the Parliament, in 1371, moved the King to decree that secular men only, and not clerks in the high sense, should ever be appointed to positions of

authority. Then unwillingly, but wisely, and not without deliberation, the king removed the Great Seal from William of Wykeham, though no law was passed making it impossible for the clergy to hold the high secular dignities.

Besides other activities, which need not concern us here, Wykeham now seems to have turned his mind to giving effect to the generous boast that he would supply the lack of learning alleged against him by giving to England a new and plentiful brood of scholars. With a munificence, which was distinguished even in those days of munificent *coups de main*, he proceeded to found and endow St. Mary of Winchester, in Oxford (New College), and St. Mary's College, in Winchester. St. Mary's College was designed as a nursery for a new College; and in the meantime Wykeham supported in Winchester the High School, in which he himself had been educated, but which was now impoverished and decayed. He undertook the charge of seventy scholars, and placed them at St. Giles's Hill, near Winchester, where they remained for many years while Wykeham was establishing the new College at Oxford, and preparing, by the purchase of Otterbourne Mead, for the erection of Winchester School.

The foundation of St. Mary's College, in Winchester, consisted, according to Wykeham's ordinance (and it is unaltered), of a Warden, and ten Fellows, three Chaplains, and three Clerks in orders; a Head Master,

an Under Master, seventy poor Scholars, and sixteen Choristers. There is something so like the fantastic mythological symbolism of the Middle Ages in the significance which has been found in this 'foundation,' that one willingly pauses over it for a moment, though any one who has made experiments in the art of inventing symbolic meanings must know how very little dependence is to be placed on such constructions. But it has been seriously contended that Wykeham had, in fixing the numbers of the foundation, a meaning of which he himself had said nothing. The Warden and ten Fellows were the eleven apostles—Judas being of course omitted. The seventy Scholars and the two Masters were the disciples whom Christ sent forth, two and two. The six Chaplains and Clergy were the six orthodox Deacons (Nicolas having, according to tradition, apostatized), while the sixteen choristers were the four greater and twelve lesser prophets. The ingenious simplicity of all this is in such true mediæval keeping that if it is not true, it ought to be.

VIII. It was a natural consequence of the intimate association in the institution of chivalry, of a code of manners in the lower sense of etiquette, and a code of ethics, that good-conduct, and what we now call 'behaviour,' were intimately associated also in the current ideas of education. We find William of Wykeham taking for his motto, 'Manners makyth man;'

and, though he enjoined it upon the Winchester scholars that they should 'esteem no man's person,' and hold all distinctions, except those which would naturally obtain by right of heart or brain in their own brotherhood, as of no value,—he also enjoined upon them the 'courtly mode' of behaviour—the 'mode' of the court, the nobles, the knights, and excellent esquires. How curiously all this reads to a modern, or at least a modernised mind, by the side of the institution of flogging every Friday—the flogging being natural on a day of penance! I do not suggest that we have any records of particular severity at Winchester. My general impression is that the discipline has been rather distinguished by mildness than otherwise; but we all remember how, in the days of Roger Ascham, numbers of the boys ran away from Eton in pure terror of the cruelty of the masters; and though Protestants, especially the elder school of Evangelical Protestants, can be cruel, and *have* been cruel to the young, severity of discipline in schools may justly be called a tradition of mediævalism. When the faith of the times was that every human being hung tremblingly balanced over the pit of the everlasting torture, and paintings of sinners scourged by the devils in hell were natural ornaments in a place of worship (an instance may be observed in St. Stephen's crypt at Westminster), and the infliction of severe pain was considered in itself a purifying process (a piece of brutal folly not yet extinct even in extra-Romish

circles), and it was considered proper to rack and burn heretics in order to frighten others from courses that might endanger their souls,—in such times, I say, the discipline of children would naturally be severe. I have never ventured to make for myself pictures in detail of the treatment boys and girls must have received in the middle ages. It is quite bad enough to think of their discomfort at a public school in those days. Tumbling out of bed before daylight on frosty mornings; no fire, or, when fire came, a smoky room; long lessons before breakfast; lumps of meat flung to the boys as if they were dogs; long dreary prayers; no women about the place to give them an air of light and tenderness, but only frowsy, dirty monks and other men.; then the dark hole and plenty of the rod—it must have been delightful. The natural good spirits of childhood must have got the better of much of this misery, and people had not then our thinness of skin; but it is impossible to think without nausea of the excessive frowsiness which must have clung to life in those days wherever large numbers of people were gathered together; and it is certain, both from what is confessed and what is unconfessed, that if the minor resources of daily existence had been what they are now, the ideal of human nature, and in particular, the estimate of the human body, would have been very different from what they were. The topic is not special to this chapter, but it arose naturally, and I did not like to pass it over,

because in our own times the dirty, direspectful traditions of *those* times still remain influential with acquiescent minds.

Before passing on, I may add a word about the mediæval manner of endowments by 'chests' along with money, the chests to hold the pledges. The Rev. H. Anstey has drawn a picture of the scholars at Oxford reclaiming their pledges, and the scene when the chests were opened for the purpose of returning them. It was an ordinary form of endowment, for other than scholastic purposes; for I note in Stowe (1371), that John Barnes, mercer, Mayor of London, 'gave a chest, with three locks, and one thousand marks, to be lent to poor young men.'

CHAPTER XIV.

UNDER SHADOW OF THE CHURCH.

THIS absurd picture of the reading of a Pope's Bull is very much to the purpose, when we are dealing with the time of Chaucer, for Pope Urban VI., at the date of the schism of the West, sent as many as thirty bulls to this country, commanding the papal clergy to urge forward the expedition against the rival pope. Bishop Spencer of Warwick was the person specially addressed by Urban, and engaged by him to prosecute the crusade

against Clement at Avignon; and he was empowered by the Pope to grant 'crusaders' indulgences' to such persons as aided this crusade against the rival with purse or person. Immense sums of money were subscribed; men and women of all classes contributed; and we may well believe that the resulting scandal upon the failure, or rather premature recession, of the crusade was enormous. When the Pope writes a letter now, Protestants call it 'the Pope's last joke;' but, notwithstanding that spectacle, in the fourteenth century, of two rival popes fighting against and excommunicating each other, there was sufficient religious unity in Europe to make a bull no joke at all.

I. The word 'Christendom' has no great force, or even definiteness of meaning, for the modern ear. Except Turkey, all Europe is nominally Christian, as it was in the fourteenth century; but not only are the believers in the explicit divinity of Christ divided upon other matters, and so split up into sects that it almost becomes difficult to put any clear meaning at all into the word Christian; for, besides, there are those who believe in various ways in the divinity of Christ's mission, and who, while they take with more or less reserve the name of Christians, do not acknowledge the authority of Christ himself as final, much less the infallible authenticity of the received records of what He said and did. To these must be added, in every country in Europe, millions of people upon whom the name of Christian

sits like a loose garment,—with no particular consciousness on the part of the wearer, who is perfectly ready to dispense with it for a *quid pro quo*. But we must enlarge our boundary yet further still. There is America, the majority of which is nominally Christian; there is a large part of Australia, which is nominally Christian; and nearly the whole world is dotted with nominally Christian settlements. To these considerations must be added the fact that there are millions of highly-cultivated, well-conducted unbelievers, who live side by side with the believers, in Europe and America, and are almost wholly assimilated to them in their general conduct. Under the pressure of crowds, shibboleths are forgotten; or they are no longer exacted, because in civilized society every man, Christian or not, finds it absolutely essential to his interest and the continuance of common intercourse to ask few questions, and to take nothing for granted in others but honesty and goodwill. How different was the state of Christendom in the fourteenth century! How much greater the force and the definiteness of the idea conveyed by the word! In the first place, America was unknown, like Australia; and a line could be pretty sharply drawn on the map,—such a map as the educated man of the time carried in his head,—around the territory which was Christian. Then, again, the fact, pressing upon the mind in a hundred ways, of the Roman Catholic Church, with its terrible hierarchy, its ramifying, far-diffused priesthood (I am thinking of the itinerant friars), its positive and highly

objective creed, its uniformity of rites, its resolute grasp of the elementary facts of human life, birth, death, and sex (a grasp maintained through its sacraments of baptism, extreme unction, and marriage), the absolute unity implied in the form of excommunication — all this tended to make the word Christendom as definite and strong a word almost as 'home' or 'England.' Nor is this all. For the history of Christianity was still lapt in the shadow of miracle, prophecy, and wondrous expectation. A man who prophesies a speedy end of the world is called a fanatic nowadays; but all Christendom had expected the Second Coming of Christ with one accord more than once during the first thousand years since His birth. The wonderful story of Bethlehem had not been criticised *then* — the cradle, the star, the Angels and the Shepherds, Pontius Pilate, and the blind soldier that pierced Jesus, were as real to the general imagination as a birth, a wedding, or a death in the next hamlet or street. The incidents of sacred story were familiar to the thoughts of men, women, and children, with a simplicity and concreteness of conception to which the miracle-plays and the carols bear superabundant testimony. The leading ideas, the foremost images, the general grand result, had undergone no process of dispersion or dilution in those comparatively rugged, boy-like days. The human imagination hovered chiefly round the Mediterranean Sea, and Christianity, like classic learning, seemed fresh from its shores. One single circumstance of mediæval story

would, if there were no other, speak trumpet-tongued of the vividness, and so to speak the recency, of Christian belief in the mind of Europe—I mean the almost judicial cruelty with which the Jews were treated—as if their hands were newly red with murder. The Crusades—is it needful to refer to them in this connexion? Or to the sharpness with which the idea of a Christian was outlined in imaginations which knew scarcely any divisions of men and women but into baptized Christians,—Jews who boiled and ate Christian babies, and lent to Christian men at fifty per cent—and Christian-slaying Saracens? Incalculable, inconceivable is the gulf between the habits of mind of a generation which reads a book like *Ecce Homo*, and a generation in which a million pilgrims flew, sword in hand, to the rescue of the Holy Sepulchre, or sober-minded travellers went to the far East in search of Prester John.

II. Let us glance at the question of clerical privilege and ecclesiastical sanctuary. The benefit of clergy, *privilegium clericale*, a phrase which most people have read in books or heard employed in conversation, is now only a phrase. The thing exists no longer; but the fact that it did exist, at least upon the Statute-book, as late as the middle of the reign of George IV., and that it existed in sufficiently active use to require fresh statutory regulation as late as the reign of Queen Anne, is sufficient to recall

to our minds, if we had let it slip, the importance, amounting to sanctity, which were attached in the eyes of society and the state, to the possession of any measurable amount of capacity of the scholar. The scholar —the man who could read—the clerk! The privileges of the clergy proper, those who had benefices, were incredible; but let us for a moment fix our thoughts upon the privileges accorded to the lay clerk, from the real scholar in the high sense to the mere man who could read,—could say his 'neck-verse at hairibee,' as William of Deloraine calls it. In strictness, a highly accomplished and studious man of letters in our own day might be as much distinguished from the crowd by his attainments as in the fourteenth century a man who could only read and write. But the line between a Hallam and any Philistine in the next street is too fine, enormously wide as it is, for the meshes of the legal sieve; and it is superfluous to say that, if Abelard himself were to murder a costermonger to-morrow, a jury of Philistines would assuredly sentence him to be hanged without benefit of clergy. This comes of the invention of printing!

When Sir Roger de Coverley and the Spectator were in the rowing-boat upon the Thames, on their way to Vauxhall, 'the old knight, turning about his head twice or thrice, to take a survey of this great metropolis, bid me observe,' says the Spectator, 'how thick the city was set with churches, and that there was scarcely a single steeple on this [the western] side of Temple Bar! A

most heathenish sight,' says Sir Roger; 'there is no religion at this end of the town. The fifty new churches will very much mend the prospect; but church work is slow, church work is slow!' It may at first seem almost too obvious a remark to make; but it is impossible to form to oneself anything like a picture of English life in the fourteenth century, and for long afterwards, without taking into account the immense difference between the ecclesiastical conditions under which lived Chaucer's contemporaries and those under which we live ourselves. The churches were, of course, less numerous in the time of the poet than in the time of Sir Roger, and yet the very face of the country, whether in town or out of it, must have attested the predominance of the Church as a social power. The presence of the monasteries and nunneries; the presence of the friars themselves as a customary element in the population,—not rare figures flitting as now across a crowded street, and stared after by the little boys,—but respected, and giving benedictions or uttering ejaculations as they passed from place to place; and the existence of the privilege of Sanctuary in certain places,—these things belong to a time when the Church was not merely an institution but a power, which penetrated into the interior of society, and modified the exterior of its life. To go out on a fine summer evening to take the air in the Minories, or to Moorfields on a winter night for a skate by moonlight; to meet a grey friar as a matter of course in Newgate Street, or to see a thief rescued by his friends from the

officers, and plumped into Sanctuary in Saint Martin's-le-grand—just where the Post Office now is!—it is not quite easy to determine which of these things is the more conceivable. 'There, in St. Martin's Lane,' says Stowe, 'was of old time a fair and large college of a dean and secular canons or priests, and was called St. Martin's-le-grand, founded by Ingelricus and Edwardus his brother, in the year of Christ 1056, and confirmed by William the Conqueror, as appeareth by his charter, dated 1068.' This college, the antiquarian goes on to say, claimed great privileges of sanctuary, 'as appeareth in a book written by a notary of that house about the year 1442, the 19th of Henry VI.' This is later by nearly fifty years than Chaucer, but the illustration will serve. The 'book written by a notary of that house,' records that, on the 1st of September, 1442, as a soldier, 'prisoner in Newgate, was led by an officer towards the Guildhall of London, there came out of Panyer Alley five of his fellowship, and took him from the officer, brought him into Sanctuary at the west door of St. Martin's church, and took grith of that place,' that is, claimed the protection of its sanctuary. And the claim was not made in vain, of course—the soldiers were received. But the City of London, carrying matters with a high hand as usual, did not let the matter rest. They sent Philip Malpas and Robert Marshall, sheriffs, with a sufficient force, and, says Stowe, 'forcibly took out with them the said five [?] thither fled, led them, fettered, to the Compter, and from thence, chained

by the necks, to Newgate.' And now, the Dean and Chapter made loud complaint to the King that their right of sanctuary had been violated, and called upon him, as their patron, to defend their privileges. Upon this came into the fray, to the help of the city, one Markham, Serjeant-at-law, and John Carpenter, late Common Clerk of the city, with others, who 'learnedly offer to prove that the said place of St. Martin had no such immunity or liberty as was pretended; namely, Carpenter offered to lose his livelihood if that church had more immunity than the least church in London.' This last touch is requisite—Carpenter's idea of proving his case by submitting a wager which could never lead to anything, is in the true mediæval style of argument, at least among commoners; and quite in accordance with the spirit which thought to secure the faithful performance of difficult duties by prescribing oaths to the undertakers. The faith of our ancestors in oaths, wagers of battle and other wagers, and generally in irrelevant words and deeds with anything like a 'spell' in them, has been spoken of, and the weight attached to an oath was natural in a day when the priest was a power, and 'holy' forms of words recited or listened to as if they were charms; but a man's thinking to influence the course of justice by 'offering to lose his livelihood' if his law was wrong, is in that true 'high style,' in which the *parole d'honneur* does duty for the syllogism. Whether anybody took care that Carpenter should lose his livelihood does not appear; but the case was decided

in favour of the Sanctuary of St. Martin; for 'after long debating of this controversy, by the King's commandment and assent of his council in the Starred Chamber, the chancellor and treasurer sent a writ unto the sheriffs of London, charging them to bring the said five persons, with the cause of their taking and withholding, afore the King in his chancery, *on the vigil of Allhallows.*' Again the remark is obvious, but how characteristic are the terms of this appointment of a time when the Church was a power which laid its finger upon every part of life. The sheriffs, recorder, and council of the City, having brought up the five [?] men 'on the vigil of Allhallows,' the chancellor, having declared the King's commandment, sent them to St. Martin's, there to abide freely, as in a place having franchises, whiles them liked.'

This is a poor plebeian story; but there is another, also belonging to a later time than Chaucer's, which is in every sense tragic, and is prominently a portion of the history of our country. It was not until the year 1775 that the Sanctuary at Westminster was destroyed, and then not easily, so thick and so strong were the walls. One midnight, in 1483, the widowed queen of Edward IV. received a message as she sat in the palace at Westminster, that the Duke of Gloucester had her first-born son,—who had drawn his earliest breath in the Sanctuary—in his hands. Taking her other son, the terrified lady fled at once to Sanctuary. The Archbishop of York, who was also Lord Chancellor, taking just alarm too, and gathering up hastily all the help he

could, fled to the same place, carrying the great seal with him. We can partly imagine the scene,—the mother, in terror for the young king, her son, but unable to get near him, hurrying as a mother in Bethlehem might have done, to a place of safety with her other child, with the men and women servants, and armed retainers, around her. It was not far to go, and, in 1483, darkness was darkness. Then came the knocking at the door, and the hurried opening, and the inmates hurrying forward with lamps, eager and curious. The servants will do the best they can with the Queen's household stuff, and get it in quickly; but meanwhile the lady is safe, and kneels down to say a prayer and cross herself, with her other hand on the neck of her little boy. Then comes the debate in the council. The Archbishop of York (now deprived of the seal) stood up like a brave Churchman, for the right of sanctuary, in a place, where five centuries previously, the apostle Peter had appeared in his own celestial body, and left his cope as a testimony. The Duke of Buckingham made a moderate speech, in which, however respectfully he spoke of the privilege of sanctuary in certain cases, he used strong words about "the rabble of thieves, murderers, and traitors,' who are sheltered in the two sanctuaries, 'at the elbow and in the very bowels of the city,'—the latter being the sanctuary of St. Martin. And the sequel we all know. My lord cardinal Bourchier, professing to agree in the opinion that though there might be 'sanctuary men,' there

could not in reason be 'sanctuary children,' proceeded to the Sanctuary, with the Archbishop of York, the latter at all events believing in the good faith of Gloucester; and, by persuasions masking threats, and many promises to the mother, got the young Duke of York delivered up to them.

We need not follow the two boys to their death in the Tower, and, of course, the whole story does not belong to the fourteenth century. But the institution of sanctuary, under the wing of the Church, has always seemed to me so beautiful in itself, that I have not been able to forbear these references, illustrating, as they do, the evident decline of the social and political validity of the idea of sanctuary which was a natural part of that general weakening of the current of ecclesiastical sentiment in the secular mind which began so strongly to manifest itself in the time of Chaucer. The institution of sanctuary must have had something, perhaps much, to do with a fact that has often arrested the attention of students—namely, that the monks, vowed to poverty and renunciation of secular aims, and apparently cut off from the life around them, were yet so often its chroniclers; the lion's providers, and more than that, of early history. Many things might be said upon this interesting subject; but the fact that the monastery was sacredly bound to be, and often was, a place of stintless and self-sacrificing hospitality, and also a place of sanctuary, are surely important features in the case. In vain did these men endeavour

to pull up the drawbridge when they had themselves retired from the world with all its myriad-faced activities of the knight's sword, the baron's castle, the lady's bower, the royal council, the administration of justice, and the like. To them came the slayer, and the political refugee, the adulterer and the adulteress, the life that was threatened, like that young prince's, and the life that for a space was weary and sought rest from the outer turmoil. What secrets the old fellows must have heard or guessed at! The vow of the sacred profession bound the confessor to secrecy; but what is any vow in the world compared with the subtle evasiveness of the human intellect? It would have been absolutely impossible, for a chronicling old monk—I put an extreme imaginary case—who had confessed Guinevere, or Launcelot, in his time, to help modifying or colouring or putting meaning into his facts in the light of his reminiscences. His intentions might be good, and his conscience clear, but the water-like flowing and re-flowing of the human mind would be too much for him.

Perhaps there may be some hair-splitting in all this; but it is certain that so long as the house of the religious recluse was a centre of hospitality, and a sanctuary in times of violence, the monks must have possessed a considerable knowledge of the outer world, and then, being debarred from any share in its activities, they would naturally enough become their chroniclers and commentators. It is impossible, try as we may,

to make real to the mind, the feelings of a religious recluse with respect to the outer world, in a day when the lines of demarcation between the sacred and the secular were so sharply and decisively drawn; but for a priest of any imagination and moral force, points of contact would be found. Let any man, having given himself up to the spirit of the place, and heard the chanting, and thought himself back a few hundred years as well as he can, stand in the nave of Westminster Abbey, and, under those awful columnar arches, which seem as if they would draw closer and closer every moment, look up at the painted window through which shines the bright afternoon sun. The feeling of the vowed recluse, accustomed to the cell, the cloister, the vigil, and the silence he cannot have; the use and wont he must miss; but he may help his imagination by permitting the long aisle of Gothic arches to do their natural work upon him. Neither the square nor the round arch affects the mind like the pointed, in which the spire is added; and while the lofty point appears as if it might for ever go on rising; the columns and the arch seem as if they might for ever draw closer and closer around and over the man who stands below and looks upwards. In the distance, indeed, the movement of approach seems already begun—there is motion in these arches—a stifling sense of being shut in comes over me as I stand. Suddenly I lift my eyes to the stained window, and what is the effect? All the outer world seems to come in

and descend upon me, through the bright colour and the shining that will not be shut out. The plumed knight goes cantering by, with the light on his corslet; the fair lady on her ambling palfrey, with her peaked head-gear, and blue velvet boddice; the statesman, the citizen, the labourer, the poor man's wife, the motley of the streets; the king's pleasure-barge, the swans, and the wherry boat on the river; the Tower, and the markets, and the bordering fields; the young men and the maidens, the old and the mature, who are yet full of life, the husbandman with the flail, the churl in the stocks, the magistrate on the seat of justice—the world I have quitted for my cloister pours in upon me like motes in a shaft of suggestion; and for me to write a chronicle will be as natural as for Crusoe to notch his stick.

In our own times, no man could hope to write a chronicle of the events that were passing around him who neglected to take counsel with the wit and humour of public commentators of one kind or another. The story of the hour is not complete without what may be gleaned from the innuendo of the *drôle* or satirist. It may perhaps be 'refining too curiously,' (but again it may not,) to notice that here, too, the monks would have had help. The fool, jester, joculator, jongleur, minstrel, or common tumbler or balladist, would sometimes knock at the monastery door and ask shelter for the night. In return for the hospitality of the holy men he would make himself agreeable in his own way; and my lord abbot would not think it any shame to be amused after the

fashion of my lord the king, or my lord of the broad lands over the hill there—even supposing he were not, as a 'holy man' so often is in every age, a humourist as well. There is an old story, which Warton and others have treated as authentic, to the effect that some Benedictines, near Oxford University, once let in two strangers, who sought their hospitality, and made them welcome under the belief that they were jesters on their travels, who could amuse them over the supper-table; but, finding that the visitors were monks,—coals to Newcastle,—turned them adrift with what the French call 'injuries.'

III. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, it was, to employ a vulgarism (which may very likely have a respectable ancestry, however,) 'high jinks' with the religious orders, especially with the friars in the fourteenth. They were rich, they were influential, they were busy and prominent. Besides the Prioress and the Nun-priest, the ecclesiastical life of Chaucer's age is represented by no fewer than three figures,—so large a space did it occupy in the mind of a great painter of manners. We have the Monk, the Friar, and the Sompnour, or Summoner for ecclesiastical offences.

The Monk is stout, energetic, and quite fit to be an Abbot; having 'a presence' as well as a good constitution. He is a mighty hunter—in the teeth of his obligations to his order—and will have bells to his horse. He likes the new order better than the old,

'which was somewhat strait.' Why should he make himself mad ('wood') with much learning? or labour with his own hand, and spade on the convent lands, as St. Augustine ordained? Let St. Augustine keep his own rule! This Monk has his greyhounds, and prefers hunting the hare to discipline. His sleeves are 'purfled' (a mark of luxury according to the sumptuary laws) with grey fur, and his hood is fastened with a golden pin, in the larger end of which is a 'love-knotte.' He is fat and even greasy; he likes a good swan to eat; and rides a brown horse in as good a condition as himself:—

'A monk ther was, a fair for the maistrie,
An out-rydere, that loved venerye;
A manly man, to ben an abbot able.
Full many a deynté hors hadde he in stable:
And whan he rood, men might his bridel heere
Gyngle in a whistlyng wynd so cleere,
And eek as lowde as doth the chapel belle.'

I cannot help pausing here to note the admirably musical line which, I have no doubt, was quite deliberately made short of a syllable —

'Jingle in a whistling wind so clear.'

This monk treats with contempt the dictum that a monk out of his cloister is a fish out of water—it was not worth 'a pulled hen' to him:—

'The reule of seynt Maure or of seint Beneyt,
Bycause that it was old and somdel streyt,

This ilke monk leet olde thinges pace,
And helde afture the newe world the space.
He gaf nat of that text a pulled hen,
That seith, that hunters been noon holy men;
Ne that a monk, whan he is cloysterles,
Is likned to a fissche that is watirles;
This is to seyn, a monk out of his cloystre.
But thilke text hild he not worth an oystre,
And I seide his opinioun was good.
What schulde he studie, and make himselven wood,
Uppon a book in cloystre alway to powre,
Or swynke with his handes, and laboure,
As Austyn byt? How schal the world be served?
Lat Austyn have his swynk to him reserved.
Therfore he was a pricasour aright'—

The 'therefore' here is excellent. Why should he make himself mad with much study? No reason could be alleged. *Therefore* he kept a stud of horses and a pack of hounds, and was always after the hares:—

'Greyhoundes he hadde as swifte as fowel in flight;
Of prikyng and of huntyng for the hare
Was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare.
I saugh his sleves purfiled atte hond [*at the hand or wrist*]
With grys, and that the fynest of a lond.
And for to festne his hood undur his chyn
He hadde of gold y-wrought a curious pyn:
A love-knotte in the gretter ende ther was.
His heed was ballid, and schon as eny glas,
And eek his face as he hadde be anoynt.
He was a lord ful fat and in good poynt;

His eyen steep, and rollyng in his heed,
That stemed as a forneys of a leed;
His bootes souple, his hors in gret estat.
Now certeinly he was a fair prelat;
He was not pale as a for-pyned goost.
A fat swan loved he best of eny roost.
His palfray was as broun as eny berye.'

A more luxurious fellow could scarcely have been drawn; a more perfect contrast to the Poor Parson; or a figure more strictly representative of the popular idea of a monk. 'His eyen steep,' *i. e.*, deep-set, under heavy brows, 'and rolling in his head,' is an admirable touch, quite suited to the conventional and, as it happens, really natural idea of a pampered ecclesiastic, in whom the tyrant is only laid to sleep under heavy folds of sensual content.

IV. The friar is, perhaps, more fair game for the satirist of the fourteenth century than the monk. This particular Friar is a 'lymtour,' *i. e.* he has a district of his own assigned to him. He is a 'prepossessing' person with agreeable 'ways;' full of 'dalliance;' and much in demand for marriages. He is hail-fellow-well-met with the farmers and their wives. He absolves upon easy terms—always ordering you to boil your peas. he will excuse the penitent of his tears if he will give 'silver to the poor friars.' He carries pedlars' ware in his hood to 'give' to the women and girls. He can sing, and tell love-stories ('yeddynges') to excite their

imaginations. He is as strong as a wrestler, and yet his neck is as white as a lady's. He is at home with tavern-keepers and tavern-frequenters; but he keeps on the windward side of beggars and vagrants,—who were not fit company for such a dainty gentleman as he. To rich and respectable people he is, however, accommodating and polite, and not above begging of a poor widow. He is well dressed, in double-thick woollen. He lisps, 'to make his English sweeter;' and he has the *twinkling* eye which belongs to the sensual nature, especially when dashed with cunning:

'A Frere ther was, a wantoun and a mèrye,
A lymytour, a ful solempne man.
In alle the ordres foure is noon that can
So moche of daliaunce and fair langage.
He hadde i-made many a fair mariage
Of yonge wymmen, at his owne cost.'

The 'at his own cost' here contains a sarcasm or humorous innuendo, which may be read in more senses than one. I would rather not meddle with it. However, the man was an honour to his order, a 'noble' exemplar for them:—

'Unto his ordre he was a noble post.
Ful wel biloved and famulier was he
With frankeleyns over al in his cuntré,
And eek with worthi wommen of the toun:
For he hadde power of confessioun,
As seyde himself, more than a curat,
For of his ordre he was licenciat.

And plesaunt was his absolucioun;
Ful sweetly herde he confessioun,
He was an esy man to geve penance
Ther as he wiste to han a good pitance;
For unto a povre ordre fer to geve
Is signe that a man is wel i-schreve.
For if he gaf, he dorste make avaunt,
He wiste that a man was repentaunt.
For many a man so hard is of his herte,
He may not wepe though him sore smerte.
Therfore in stede of wepyng and prayeres,
Men mooten given silver to the pore freres.
His typet was ay farsud ful of knyfes
And pynnes, for to give faire wyfes.
And certayn he hadde a mery noote.
Wel couthe he synge and pleye on a rote.
Of yeddynges he bar utturly the prys.
His nekke whit was as the flour-de-lys.
Therto he strong was as a champioun.
He knew wel the tavernes in every toun,
And every ostiller or gay tapstere,
Bet than a lazer, or a beggere,
For unto such a worthi man as he
Acorded not, as by his faculté,
To have with sike lazars aqueyntaunce.
It is not honest, it may not avaunce,
For to delen with such poraile,
But al with riche and sellers of vitaille.'

Wherever there was a chance of any profit arising to his order, no man was more courteous, serviceable, or virtuous:—

'And over al, ther eny profyt schulde arise,
Curteys he was, and lowe of servyse.

Ther was no man nowher so vertuous.
He was the beste begger in al his hous,
For though a widewe hadde but oo schoo,
So plesaunt was his *In principio,*
Yet wolde he have a ferthing or he wente.
His purchace was bettur than his rente;
And rage he couthe and pleye as a whelpe,
In love-days ther couthe he mochil helpe.
For ther was he not like a cloysterer,
With a thredbare cope as a pore scoler,
But he was like a maister or a pope.
Of double worstede was his semy-cope,
That rounded was as a belle out of presse.
Somwhat he lipsede, for wantounesse,
To make his Englissch swete upon his tunge;
And in his harpyng, whan that he hadde sunge,
His eyghen twynkeled in his heed aright,
As don the sterres in the frosty night.
This worthi lymytour was called Huberd.'

This pleasant vagabond is a very fine picture of an ecclesiastical beggar. He wore 'double worstede' himself, but if a poor widow—one may note in passing, that the poor widow is, in Chaucer as elsewhere, the common type of extreme poverty—if a poor widow had but one shoe left to her, he would wheedle a farthing out of her by chanting and cajoling.

V. One of the most characteristic, as well as one of the most minutely drawn of the portraits in the Canterbury Tales is that of the Pardoner,—the man who had pardons to sell, and carried relics in his pocket,

also for sale. He was the companion of the Sompnour:

'With him ther rood a gentil Pardoner
Of Rouncival, his frend and his comper,
That streyt was comen from the court of Rome,
Ful lowde he sang, Come hider, love, to me.
This Sompnour bar to him a stif burdoun,
Was nevere trompe of half so gret a soun.
This Pardoner hadde heer as yelwe as wex,
But smothe it heng, as doth a strike of flex;
By unces hynge his lokkes that he hadde,
And therwith he his schuldres overspradde.
Ful thenne it lay, by culpons on and oon,
But hood, for jolitee, ne wered he noon,
For it was trussud up in his walet.
Him thought he rood al of the newe get,
Dischevele, sauf his cappe, he rood al bare.
Suche glaryng eyghen hadde he as an hare.
A vernicle hadde he sowed on his cappe.
His walet lay byforn him in his lappe,
Bret ful of pardoun come from Rome al hoot.
A voys he hadde as smale as eny goot.
No berd ne hadde he, ne never scholde have,
As smothe it was as it ware late i-schave.
* * * * * *
But of his craft, fro Berwyk unto Ware,
Ne was ther such another pardoner.
For in his male he hadde a pilwebeer,
Which, that he saide, was oure lady veyl:
He seide, he hadde a gobet of the seyl
That seynt Petur hadde, when that he wente
Uppon the see, till Jhesu Crist him hente.
He hadde a cros of latoun ful of stones,
And in a glas he hadde pigges bones.

But with thise reliques, whanne that he fand
A pore persoun dwellyng uppon land,
Upon a day he gat him more moneye
Than that the persoun gat in monthes twoye.
And thus with feyned flaterie and japes,
He made the persoun and the people his apes.
But trewely to tellen atte laste,
He was in churche a noble ecclesiaste.
Wel cowde he rede a lessoun or a storye,
But altherbest he sang an offertorie,
For wel wyst he, whan that song was songe,
He moste preche, and wel affyle his tunge,
To wynne silver, as he right wel cowde;
Therefore he sang ful meriely and lowde.'

The gentleman, we note, was musical; wore no hood, but had yellow hair so long that it hung by ounces down his back. He had prominent eyes, like a hare, a 'small' voice, and a girl's chin, unshaven. In his cap he carried a 'vernicle,' or picture of the head of Christ. In his mall or wallet were 'pardons come from Rome, all hot,' along with curious relics—a piece of the Virgin's veil, a gobet of Saint Peter's seal, and pigs' bones ('for saints.') By selling pardons he made more in a day than a poor parson earned in two months; in fact, he made fools of parson and people too. Yet he had his good points. Look at him *in church*, and he filled his place handsomely. He could read well and sing the offertory well.

This is merely the sketch of the Pardoner given in the Prologue of Chaucer. When we come to the Pro-

logue he himself delivers to the story he tells, we have a much more drawn-out likeness. The Pardoner says that, when he preaches in church, he does it with a loud, commanding voice; for he has learnt by rote what he has got to say, so that he has no need to hesitate. His theme is always one and ever was, namely, that the root of evils is the love of money.. 'First,' says he, 'I declare whence I come (namely, from Rome), and I exhibit my bulls, and warn the folks that none of them be so bold as to disturb me in the holy work of Christ. Then I take care to speak a few words in Latin, in order to flavour my discourse, and to stir men to devotion. After this I produce my relics; for instance, a bone that was once part of a sheep belonging to *a holy Jew*, and I inform the rustics (or lewd people) that this saint's relic will cure diseases of various kinds in his live stock, and so forth:—

'"Lordyngs," quod he, "in chirche whan I preche,
I peyne me to have an hauteyn speche,
And ryng it out, as lowd as doth a belle,
For I can al by rote that I telle.
My teeme is alway oon, and ever was;
Radix malorum est cupiditas.
First I pronounce whennes that I come,
And thanne my bulles schewe I alle and some;
Oure liege lordes seal upon my patent,
That schewe I first my body to warent,
That no man be so hardy, prest ne clerk,
Me to destourbe of Cristes holy werk.
Bulles of popes, and of cardynales,

Of patriarkes, and of bisshops, I schewe,
And in Latyn speke I wordes fewe
To savore with my predicacioun,
And for to stere men to devocioun.
Thanne schewe I forth my longe cristal stoones,
I-crammed ful of cloutes and of boones,
Reliks thay ben, as wene thei echoon.
Than have I in latoun a schulder boon,
Which that was of an holy Jewes scheep.
Good men," say I, " tak of my wordes keep;
If that this boon be waische in eny welle,
If cow, or calf, or scheep, or oxe swelle,
That eny worm hath ete, or worm i-stonge,
Tak water of that welle, and waische his tonge,
And it is hool anoon; and forthermore
Of pokkes, and of scabbe, and every sore,
Schal every scheep be hool, that of this welle
Drynketh a draught; tak heed eek what I telle.
If that the goode man, that the beest oweth,
Wol every wike, er that the cok him croweth,
Fastynge, drynke of this welle a draught,
As thilke holy Jew oure eldres taught,
His beestes and his stoor schal multiplie."'

This unctuous scoundrel goes on to say, that he tells the lewd people 'a hundred tricks more,' and, among the rest, that his relic kills jealousy; a pleasant suggestion, once more, of what ecclesiastical people were accustomed to think of the domestic life of the rude laymen of the time. Do you think, proceeds the Pardoner, that I am going to follow the example of the Apostles, and labour with my hands at basket-making, as Paul did at tent-making? No, I will go on begging,

and have money, cheese, wool, and wheat, though I squeeze it out of the priest's errand-boy or the poorest widow in the village. I will drink wine, too, and, generally, indulge myself:—

'I preche so as ye have herd before,
And telle hem an hondred japes more.
* * * * *
And, sires, also it kelith jalousie.
* * * * *
By this gaude have I wonne every yeer
An hundred mark, sin I was pardoner.
I stonde lik a clerk in my pulpit,
And whan the lewed poeple is doun i-set,
Than telle I hem ensamples many oon
Of olde thinges longe tyme agoon.
For lewed people loven tales olde;
Which thinges can thay wel report and holde,
What? trowe ye, whiles I may preche
And wynne gold and silver for I teche,
That I wil lyve in povert wilfully?
Nay, nay, I thought it never trewely.
For I wol preche and begge in sondry londes.
I wil do no labour with myn hondes,
Ne maken baskets and lyve therby,
Bycause I wil nought begge ydelly.
I wol noon of thapostles counterfete
I wol have money, wolle, chese, and whete,
Al were it geven of the prestes page,
Or of the porest wydow in a village,
And schold hir children sterve for famyn.
Nay, I wol drinke licour of the wyn,
And . . . . . .

And here the quotation must break off, for the next line, though probably characteristic enough of a Pardoner in the reign of Edward III., is not producible in English family circles in the reign of Victoria. The last touch, the sly reference to the Apostle Paul's working with his hands, is excellent. Chaucer's realism is admitted on all hands. He had no thought of posterity; or of Protestantism, when he painted this portrait of a Popish Pardoner. But if it be as true as the Wife of Bath—as it assuredly is—who can wonder that Wickliffe arose in England, and that the echo of his footsteps did not die out till Luther arose in Germany?

When the Pardoner is first called upon for his story he gladly consents, but, pausing before an alehouse, declares he will have a drink first. The better sort of the company exclaim against his being permitted to tell a tale, on the ground that he will probably relate something indecent,—

'Nay, let him tellen us no ribaudye.'

However, notwithstanding his prologue, he delivers himself of a very sermonising speech, especially abusing gluttony and drunkenness, and cautioning his hearers against 'the white wyn that is to selle in Fleet Street or in Chepe.' When he has finished his tale, he impudently turns round to his fellow-pilgrims and observes that he has forgotten one thing in his narrative, namely, that he has relics and pardons in his wallet,

and that if any of the company want absolution, he is ready to bestow it, in exchange for good money (there was much base coin in circulation at the time), silver spoons, brooches, or rings. It is a lucky thing, he continues, that you happen to have a pardoner among you, for look, lordings, one of you may fall off his horse, and break his neck:—

'But, sires, o word forgat I in my tale;
I have reliks and pardoun in my male,
As fair as eny man in Engelond,
Which were me geve by the popes hond.
If eny of yow wol of devocioun
Offren, and have myn absolucioun,
Comath forth anon, and knelith her adoun,
And ye schul have here my pardoun.
Or elles takith pardoun, as ye wende,
Al newe and freissch at every townes ende,
So that ye offren alway new and newe
Nobles and pens, which that ben good and trewe.
It is an honour to every that is heer,
That ye may have a suffisaunt pardoner
Tassoile yow in contre as ye ryde,
For aventures which that may bytyde.
For paravunter ther may falle oon, or tuo,
Doun of his hors, and breke his nekke a-tuo.'

This cool reliance upon the ever-elastic force of current superstition among ordinary human beings, has always struck me as being one of the most dramatic touches in Chaucer. However, the Pardoner, noticing

that the company were rather slack at coming forward, offers a 'pardon' for a groat to the Host:—

> 'I rede that oure hoste schal bygynne,
> For he is most envoliped in synne.
> Com forth, sire ost, and offer first anoon,
> And thou schalt kisse the reliques everichoon,
> Ye, for a grote; unbocle anon thi purs.'

The response of Harry Baily is far too gross to be quoted, almost too gross to be read, though not without humour:—

> 'This Pardoner answerde nat a word;
> So wroth he was, he wolde no word say.'

The Knight—type of courtesy—interferes to make peace between the wranglers, and we get a curious glimpse of the manners of the time in the fact that the Host, at the Knight's invitation, bestows the kiss of charity upon the Pardoner, and the Pardoner upon him!

CHAPTER XV.

UNDER SHADOW OF THE CHURCH (*continued*).

To continue the unpleasant subject of Monks and Friars, there is, at the commencement of the Wife of Bath's tale, one of the happiest examples of Chaucer's bantering lightsomeness, having special reference to the Friars. The lady recalls that, in the days of King Arthur, the land was full of fairies, the elf-queen and her pretty company always dancing in the green mea-

dows. But now the elves are to be seen no longer, because the great charity, and the prayers of the holy friars—as thick they are as motes in the sunbeams (and what a delightful idea!)—searching in every place by land and water, and blessing everything from halls to dairies, *make it that there are* no fairies left. (I like to retain this expression.) Formerly, where you used to meet a fairy, you now meet a friar. Conceive the contrast between the dainty little beauty dancing among the daisies, and the great hulking, dirty, shaven priest saying his matins and *his holy things* (the vague contempt this phrase conveys as it stands is admirable) at under-meal-times and in the early mornings. Whereas the trees and bushes used, in classical times, to be haunted by faun or satyr, who sprang out upon the nymphs as they passed on their way to bathe; and, in later times, by the Incubus, or elf-successor of the faun, who, also, used to molest the passing nymph, women may *now* go safely up and down, for the friar is the only Incubus now-a-days, and he will not annoy nymphs as they pass:—

> In olde dayes of the kyng Arthour,
> Of which that Britouns speken gret honour,
> Al was this lond fulfilled of fayrie
> The elf-queen with hir joly compaignie,
> Daunced ful oft in many a grene mede.
> This was the old opynyoun, as I rede;
> I speke of many hundrid yer ago;
> But now can no man see noon elves mo.

For now the grete charite and prayeres
Of lymytours and other holy freres,
That sechen every lond and every streem,
As thik as motis in the sonne-beem,
Blessyng halles, chambres, kichenes, and boures,
Citiees and burghes, castels hihe and toures,
Thropes [*thorps*] and bernes [*barns*], shepenes [*sheep-pens*] and dayeries,
That makith that ther ben no fayeries.
For ther as wont was to walken an elf,
Ther walkith noon but the lymytour himself,
In undermeles and in morwenynges,
And saith his matyns and his holy thinges
As he goth in his lymytatioun.
Wommen may now go saufly up and doun;
In every bussch, and under every tre,
Ther is non other incubus but he,
And he ne wol doon hem no dishonour.'

But this sly suggestion, that the holy man would not even chuck a milkmaid under the chin, does not seem to have grown into a a serious belief among the populace.

An impressive picture of the figure which a Frere, or Friar, presented in England in the time of Chaucer is found in a ballad of the time. I will venture to quote a considerable portion of it. The holy friars give themselves more to devotion than any other order in the Church. Whoso follows their examples, giving himself to great study and great prayers, will be sure of heaven. Men may see by their faces that they suffer from their severities of penance, and that their food is

bare and slight. Indeed, they are so thin that a friar is not more than a load for a horse:—

'Preste, ne monke, ne yit chanoun,
Ne no man of religioun,
Gyfen hem so to devocioun,
As done thes holy frers.
For summe gyven ham to chyvalry,
Somme to riote and ribaudery;
Bot ffrers gyven ham to grete study,
And to grete prayers,
Who so kepes thair reule al,
bothe in worde and dede;
I am ful siker that he shal
have heven blis to mede.

Men may se by thair contynaunce,
That thai are men of grete penaunce,
And also that thair sustynaunce
Simple is and wayke.
I have lyved now fourty yers,
And fatter men about the neres
Yit sawe I never then are these frers,
In contreys ther thai rayke.
Meteles so megre are thai made,
and penaunce so puttes ham doun,
That ichone is an hors-lade,
when he shal trusse of toun.'

It is a grievous shame that such learned clerks should be obliged to beg their way in couples from town to town. The inventor of the system must have been very unwise. For these unfortunate men have

nothing to live by, and so they turn pedlers. And it is ill-luck to the husband when the good man is from home and the friar calls upon his dame. If the friars had to live on what they got from the *husbands* only, they would be very thin. They carry about a variety of furs (pelure, &c., &c.) for the women to trim their dresses with, and also spices or perfumes :—

'Allas ! that ever it shuld be so,
Suche clerkes as thai about shuld go,
Fro toun to toun by two and two,
To seke thair sustynaunce.
By God that al this world wan,
He that that ordre first bygan,
Me thynk certes it was a man
Of simple ordynaunce.
For thai have noght to lyve by,
thai wandren here and there,
And dele with dyvers marcerye,
right as thai pedlers were.

Thai dele with purses, pynnes, and knyves,
With gyrdles, gloves, for wenches and wyves ;
Bot ever bacward the husband thryves
Ther thai are haunted tille.
For when the gode man is fro hame,
And the frere comes to oure dame,
He spares nauther for synne ne shame,
That he ne dos his wille.
Yif thai no helpe of houswyves had,
when husbandes are not inne,
The freres welfare were ful bad,
for thai shuld brewe ful thynne.

Somme frers beren pelure aboute,
For grete ladys and wenches stoute,
To reverce with thair clothes withoute ;
Al after that thai ere.
For somme vaire, and somme gryse,
For somme bugee, and for somme byse,
And also many a dyvers spyse,
In bagges about thai bere.
Al that for women is plesand
ful redy certes have thai ;
Bot lytel gyfe thai the husband,
that for al shal pay.

Trantes thai can, and many a jape ;
For somme can with a pound of sape
Gete him a kyrtelle and a cape,
And som what els therto.
Wherto shuld I othes swere ?
Ther is no pedler that pak can bere,
That half so dere can selle his gere,
Then a frer can do.
For if he gife a wyfe a knyfe
that cost bot penys two,
Worthe ten knyves, so mot I thryfe,
he wyl have er he go.'

They can make clever bargains, or exchanges with the women, and if they sell a housewife a knife that cost two pence they will have the worth of ten knives before they depart. Let no man who has wife or daughter admit the friar to shrive them, for if he once gains a footing in the 'bower,' woe be to the lord of the house!

'Iche man that here shal lede his life,
That has a faire doghter or a wyfe,
Be war that no frer ham shryfe,
Nauther loude ne stille.
Thof women seme of hert ful stable,
With faire byhest and with fab
Thai can make thair hertes chaungeable,
And thair likynges fulfille.
Be war ay with the lymitour,
and with his felawe bathe,
And thai make maystries in thi bour
it shal turne the to scathe.'

* * * * * *

The friars say that they destroy sin, but the fact is that they encourage men in sinning; for if a man had slain all his kindred, he could get a friar to assoilzie him for less than the price of a pair of shoes. It really seems as if what people affirm of the Friars in every land were true, namely, that Cain was the founder of their order; for the Carmelites come of a *k* (*c* hard); the Augustines of an *a*; the Jacobite brothers of an *i*; and the Minorites of an *m*. And look at the numbers there are of them! Hell itself will be so full of friars that there will be no room for anybody else: —

'Thai say that thai distroye synne,
And thai mayntene men moste therinne;
For had a man slayn al his kynne,
Go shryve him at a frere,

And for lesse then a payre of shone
He wyl assoil him clene and sone,
And say the synne that he has done
His saule shal never dere.
It semes sothe that men sayne of hayme
in many dyvers londe,
That that caytyfe cursed Cayme
first this order fonde.

Nou se the sothe whedre it be swa,
That frer Carmes com of a k.,
That frer Austynes come of a.,
Frer Jacobynes of i.,
Of m. comen the frer Menours;
Thus grounded Caym thes four ordours,
That fillen the world ful of errours,
And of ypocrisy.
Alle wyckednes that men can telle
regnes ham among;
Ther shal no saule have rowme in helle,
of frers ther is suche throng.'

They do their best to depreciate the clergy proper, and a few years will show that they shall experience the fate of the Templars, and be 'distroyed and broght adoun:'—

'Thai travele yerne and bysily,
To brynge doun the clergye;
Thai speken therof ay vilany,
And therof thai done wrong.
Whoso lyves oght many yers,
Shal se that it shal falle of frers,
As it dyd of the templers,
That wonned here us among.

For thai held no religioun,
bot lyved after lykyng,
Thai were distroyed and broght adoun
thurgh ordynance of the kyng.'

These friars preach and talk all manner of holy things, but they do them not. I was on probation for a friar myself, but when I saw that their mode of life (like that which was alleged of the Templars) did not correspond with their professions, I devoted them to the devil and escaped. But I was not an apostate, or perjured monk, for I was a month and ten days short of taking the final vow. Lord God! who didst buy man's salvation with such costly pains, forbid that any man, after me, should ever think of becoming a friar!

'Ful wysely can thai preche and say;
Bot as thai preche no thing do thai.
I was a frere ful many a day,
Therefor the sothe I wate.
Bot when I sawe that thair lyvyng
Acordyd not to thair preching,
Of I cast my frer clothing,
And wyghtly went my gate.
Other leve ne toke I none,
from ham when I went,
Bot toke ham to the devel ychone,
the priour and the covent.

Out of the ordre thof I be gone,
Apostate ne am I none,
Of twelve monethes me wanted one,
And odde days nyen or ten

Of tyme come of professioun.
Away to wende I made me boun;
I went my way thurghout the toun,
In syght of many men.
Lord God, that with paynes ille
mankynde boght so dere,
Let never man after me have wille
for to make him frere.'

The introduction of the Itinerant or Mendicant Friars into England (as helps in the interest of the Papacy), of the monks and the secular clergy, seems to me to have done more to precipitate the separation, which in any case would have arrived (and having arrived will now remain) between England and Rome, than anything else that could be specified. In a country less domestic or less commercial than England, Dominicans in white or Franciscans in brown, may be conceived as going about in towns and villages, without coming in contact with things which, by fault or default or inevitable consequence, must bring their office into disrepute, and cause their room to be preferred to their company. But it is no cant, it is greatly true, to say that the English ever were and are a home-making, home-loving people. With them, even the vices which threaten domestic duties and joys gravitate towards domestic forms. It may safely be said that nothing which menaces the English idea of a home life will ever keep root in England. A clergyman who is celibate by compulsion, or by choice founded on

dogma, is looked upon with jealousy — and I think with just jealousy*—by the ordinary English husband; the type of the man who, though neither the head nor the *soul* of English life, is the muscle and the common heart of it. But what would it be to have such celibates wandering about the country at pleasure by the thousand; dropping into people's homes at all hours, singing, preaching, story-telling, news-bearing, christening, marrying, and meddling in the name of the Church at their own sweet will, with begging-bag at one side, pardon-bag at another, holy relics in their pockets, and pedlars' trinkets for the women in their hoods? These preaching itinerating friars must have been picked men indeed, if they were to keep their place as a portion of English society. But besides the domestic question, there is the commercial aspect of the case. Mr. Ruskin says that the modern English have a 'just and wholesome contempt' for poverty—the reader will forgive the addition that they always had. Rome may consecrate poverty as she will, but the notion will never become acclimatized in England or Scotland. Every good man likes to give, and every humane man acknowledges cases in which poverty comes to him with a halo of light around its meagre forehead, but the regulated deliberate begging of an order of men vowed to poverty, is a

* It will not be forgotten—and it is one of Chaucer's incomparable sly touches—that the Pardoner proffers a sacred charm against jealousy, among other things.

kind of thing which must rapidly come to grief in trying to 'clear' some of the facts of English life. It must take picked men to keep the vow of poverty as well as the other vow of the friar's vocation, and accordingly we find the mendicant religious orders were traffickers in small deer such as villagers, and especially village women, care for, while the churches of the friars were often gorgeous and costly properties. In England there is, one might say, a contagion of buying and selling, and the friars took it. The reader is in possession of some idea of the manner in which the balladists of the day dealt with the friars, both as pedlars and disturbers of domestic peace.

Undoubtedly, the satirical literature of an age, and perhaps all writing directed against prevalent wrong-doing, exaggerates the evils which it criticises. It is very seldom that men who care much for the truth write satire, and popular castigators of vice are usually men of indifferent character, who gratify bad passions by making it a trade. There never was a society sunk so low that it would not pay somebody or other to come forward and *pretend* to be dissatisfied with its morality. Truth is tender, though resolved and unflinching; and it is impossible to be tender and true, and yet to be clever with the cleverness which pleases the multitude. Almost all the passing literature, and much of the permanent literature which attacks vice, is claptrap written by vicious or half-vicious men, rancorously returning upon themselves, and having neither

fear of God nor respect for human nature before their eyes. Hence I always take with many grains of chloride such writing as the ballads from which specimens are hereafter given. But the facts upon which they are founded are notorious, and it is impossible not to believe them—because they are congruous and natural. A large number of the itinerant friars were what one's observation of average human nature would lead one to expect.

Conceive, then these mendicant monks threading the lanes and roads of England in their brown robes, being for the most part Franciscans, trafficking with the wives and daughters of townsmen and villagers, while the husbands are abroad, and going in and out pretty much as they like. It is impossible to read the abominable 'Sompneres Tale' without noticing that the 'frere' is excused from some of the diffidence which should be expected from a layman on entering another man's house:—

> 'This frere he com, as he were in a rage,
> Wer that this lord sat eatyng at his bord,
> Unnethe might the frere speke a word,
> Til atte last he sayde, "God yow se!"
> This lord gan loke, and sayde, *Benedicite!*
> What, frere Johan! what maner world is this?
> I se wel that som thing is amys;
> Ye loke as though the woode were ful of thevys.
> Sit doun anoon, and tel me what your gref is.'

And this is obviously natural, as the priest could

bring with him blessing or ban; and, as the representative of the church was entitled, to claim ear and hospitality of anyone on the spot. Of the hospitality claimed nothing need be said; the monastery may have given back in hospitality and sanctuary more than the mendicants took. But the sending out of these friars in England was certainly a hazardous experiment, and by the time of Chaucer they were in very bad esteem. To such considerations as these must be added another. The rapid dissemination of news, though favourable to the tyranny of popular majorities and the evolution of a common sentiment in crowds, is of course unfavourable to a centralized despotism of any kind whatever. It keeps supplied with fuel the critical or fault-finding faculty, and all the jealous instincts of men. And the itinerant friars were of necessity newsmen. It was impossible that they should not sympathize with the political and social agitations of the time; impossible, mixing with the common people, that they should not carry news from cities to towns, and from towns to villages. In a very short time, for instance, the squabble in St. Paul's between Bishop Courtney and John of Gaunt would be known all over the home counties; and so of the riots in the City on the re-election of John Comberton. It is to be feared too, *esprit de corps* and holy rule notwithstanding, that one friar would sometimes be found telling tales of another, especially if the two came into competition, either as traffickers or courtiers,

in the farm-house or the manor-house. Nothing can *explain* or account for that general 'awakening' which marks the fourteenth century, and which culminated in the Reformation; but a body of men who were news-bearers in an age like this, must have largely helped in the fermentations of the popular intelligence which accompanied the Protestant activity of Wickliffe and his contemporaries.

I do not pretend to understand human nature well enough to judge of the policy of the mediæval church, in constantly aiming by positive legislation to restrict evils which it could not destroy at once. It is not easy to see how power, in the sense of external compulsion, can be exerted without a policy; but then, on the other hand, the use of a policy of any kind does not seem to me, or to thousands of others, congruous with the idea of inspiration which lies at the basis of a church. However, setting aside, as one of a class of speculations which I have elsewhere condemned, the question, what might have been the result if the church of the Middle Ages, instead of establishing a policy and entangling herself with expediencies, had made her ideal that of a free spiritual power only, it is certain she did by her policy diminish the apparent size of many evils. For example, it interfered to silence the clashing of the sword, not wholly, but in part. By the law of the Peace of God, fighting and violence were once forbidden from Wednesday night to Monday morning, and, naturally, upon the festivals of

the Church. That the rule of St. Benedict enforced agricultural labour upon his monks, is a familiar fact, and the mediæval church took agriculture under its protection by making the neighbourhood of a plough a place of sanctuary,—an amiable institution, not unconnected with the fact that in the form of the plough might be discerned the form of a cross.

II. One willingly gives every natural and honest degree of prominence to the kindly aspects of bad things, but we must return for a moment to something less agreeable. One of the drollest things in the Canterbury Tales,—illustrating as it does the tendency (which I have just hinted at) which would naturally arise in the average holy man to tell tales of another holy man,—is the Friar's Tale, of a scoundrel Sompnour or Summoner. When the Wife of Bath has finished her story, the Friar, or Frere, announces his intention of telling a tale about a Sompnour, or Summoner, the ecclesiastical officer whose function it was to summon immoral people, and those who broke the rules of Holy Church, before the Archdeacon. He was, in the nature of things, a very important person, and the Friar begins by saying: —

> 'I wil yow of a Sompnour telle a game;
> Parde, ye may wel knowe by the name,
> That of a sompnour may no good be sayd.'

The host rebukes the discourtesy of this personal re-

ference, and the Summoner replies that he will have his revenge: —

> 'Our oste spak, "A! sir, ye schold been heende,
> And curteys, as a man of your estaat,
> In company we wol have no debaat;
> Telleth your tale, and let the Sompnour be."
> "Nay," quoth the Sompnour, "let him say to me
> What so him list; whan it cometh to my lot,
> By God! I schal him quyten every grot.
> I schal him telle which a gret honour
> Is to ben a fals flateryng lymytour.
> And his offis I schal him telle I wis."
> Oure host answerd, "Pees, no more of this."
> And after this he sayd unto the Frere,
> "Telleth forth your tale, my leve maister deere."'

There is something intensely English in all this fair play, enforced among such vermin by an innkeeper, and preserved with but little difficulty too. However, the Friar proceeds to tell his story of a Summoner, whom, in terms that I cannot reproduce, he describes as a very filthy rascal. The Summoner, who was one of the pilgrims, interrupts him, but the host again interferes, and the tale proceeds. By bribery and base compacts with immoral men and women, this Summoner was always contriving to impound something in the Archdeacon's court, and make money out of his management of the cases. One day,—the story does not appear to have been of Chaucer's origination,—this Summoner rode forth, determined to entrap an

old ribibe (cracked guitar) of a widow woman, and as he walked by a forest, he saw a gay forester riding, with bow and arrows, dressed in green, in a hat with black fringe.

> 'And so bifel, that oones on a day
> This Sompnour, ever wayting on his pray,
> Rod forth to sompne a widew, an old ribibe,
> *Feynyng a cause, for he wolde han a bribe.*
> And happed that he say biforè him ryde
> A gay yeman under a forest syde;
> A bow he bar, and arwes bright and kene,
> He had upon a courtepy of grene,
> An hat upon his heed, with frenges blake.
> "Sir," quod his Sompnour, "heyl and wel overtake!'

The forester asks if the Summoner is a bailiff:—

> '"Artow than a bayely?" "Ye," quod he,
> *He durste not for verray filth and schame*
> *Sayn that he was a sompnour, for the name.*'

By-and-bye the forester, who had at first declared himself a bailiff too, avows his real character:—

> '"Brothir," quod he, "woltow that I the telle?
> I am a feend, my dwellyng is in helle,
> And her I ryde about my purchasyng,
> To wite wher men wol give me eny thing.
> Loke how thou ridest for the same entent
> To wynne good, thou rekkist never how,
> Right so fare I, for ryde I wolde now
> Unto the worldes ende for a pray.'"

The Summoner cries 'Benedicite!' at this, but they ride on till they come to the cottage of the old widow, out of whom the Summoner announces his intention of screwing a shilling, though the poor woman should go mad for it.

'This Sompnour clapped at the widowes gate;
"Com out," quod he, "thou old viritrate;
I trowe thou hast som frere or prest with the."
"Who clappith ther?" sayd this widow, "*benedicite!*
God save yow, sir! what is your swete wille?"
"I have," quod he, "a somonaunce of a bille,
Up payne of cursyng, loke that thou be
To morwe biforn our erchedeknes kne,
To answer to the court of certeyn thinges."
"Now," quod sche, "Jhesu Crist, and king of kinges,
So wisly helpe me, as I ne may.
I have ben seek, and that ful many a day.
I may not goon so fer," quod she, "ne ryde,
But I be deed, so prikith it in my syde."'

Her side being so bad, she asks for a copy of the summons, so that an attorney may attend to it on her behalf:—

'"May I nat aske a lybel, sir Sompnour,
And answer ther by my procuratour
To suche thing as men wol oppose me?"
"Yis," quod this Sompnour, "pay anoon, let se,
Twelf pens to me, and I the wil acquite.
I schal no profyt have thereby but lite;
My mayster hath the profyt and not I.
Com of, and let me ryden hastily;

Gif me my twelf pens, I may no lenger tary."
" Twelf pens ?" quod sche, " now lady seinte Mary
So wysly help me out of care and synne,
This wyde world though that I schulde wynne,
Ne have I not twelf pens withinne myn hold."'

Very good, says the Summoner, by St. Anne, I will have your new pan,

'For dette, which thou owest me of old,
Whan that thou madest thin housbond cokewold,
I payd at hom for thy correccioun.'

The impudent malignity of this arouses the wrath of the old woman. 'Thou liest,' says she.

'" Thou lixt," quod sche, " by my savacioun,
Ne was I never er now, wydow ne wyf,
Somound unto court in al my lyf;
Ne never I was but of my body trewe.
Unto the devel rough and blak of hiewe
Give I thy body and the panne also!"

Observe that the widow here devotes the Summoner and her pan to the devil. This rouses the 'forester:'—

'And whan the devyl herd hir curse so
Upon hir knees, he sayd in this manere :
" Now, Mabely, myn owne modir deere,
Is this your wil in ernest that ye seye ?"
" The devel," quod sche, " fecche him er he deye,
And panne and al, but he wol him repente!"
" Nay, old stot, that is not myn entente,"
Quod this Sompnour, " for to repente me
For eny thing that I have had of the;

I wold I had thy smok and every cloth."
"Now, brothir," quod the devyl, "be not wroth;
Thy body and this panne is myn by right.
Thow schalt with me to helle yit to night,
Wher thou schalt knowen of our privete
More than a maister of divinite."
And with that word the foule fend him hente;
Body and soule, he with the devyl wente,
Wher as the Sompnours han her heritage;
And God that maked after his ymage
Mankynde, save and gyde us alle and some,
And leeve this Sompnour good man to bycome.'

The charitable wish with which the Friar concludes, after announcing that these Summoners have their heritage in the domain of the 'forester,' is an exquisite touch. It is not necessary to say that the Summoner pilgrim is not appeased. On the contrary, he immediately relates a very gross anecdote to the detriment of friars, in which, also, the 'forester' figures.

This Summoner, or Sompnour, who is one of the Pilgrims of Canterbury, is not even so agreeable a person as the Friar. The children run away when his red, pimpled face comes into view. He thinks morality is for other people; and makes the worst possible use of his power over the young women in his diocese. When he is in his cups, which is often, he is noisy, and full of law and Latin. For a 'harlot' (*i. e.* a loose fellow), he is a good sort, and not as tenacious of self-respect as greedy of pleasure. He thinks a man's soul is in his purse, and is always ready to commute the

sentence of the archdeacon for a fine, which he puts into his pocket. Being the ugliest man in the company, he wears a garland of flowers, and has stuck a cake upon his staff, he is so playful: —

'A Sompnour was ther with us in that place,
That hadde a fyr-reed cherubynes face,
For sawceflem he was, with eyghen narwe. [*sawceflem*, pimpled,]
As hoot he was, and leccherous, as a sparwe,
With skalled browes blak, and piled berd;
Of his visage children weren sore aferd.
Ther nas quyksilver, litarge, ne brimstone,
Boras, ceruce, ne oille of tartre noon,
Ne oynement that wolde clense and byte,
That him might helpen of his whelkes white,
Ne of the knobbes sittyng on his cheekes.
Wel loved he garleek, oynouns, and ek leekes,
And for to drinke strong wyn reed as blood.'

The image of this disagreeable man with his fire-red, plump, cherub's face, shouting out nothing but Latin when he was tipsy, is suggested in Chaucer's best manner: —

'Thanne wolde he speke, and crye as he were wood.
And whan that he wel dronken hadde the wyn,
Than wolde he speke no word but Latyn.
A fewe termes hadde he, two or thre,
That he hadde lerned out of som decree;
No wondur is, he herde it al the day,
And eek ye knowe wel, how that a jay
Can clepe Watte, as wel as can the pope.
But who so wolde in othur thing him grope,

Thanne hadde he spent al his philosophie,
Ay, *Questio quid juris*, wolde he crye.
He was a gentil harlot and a kynde;
A bettre felaw schulde men nowher fynde.

. . . . .

And if he fond owher a good felawe,
He wolde teche him to have non awe
In such a caas of the archedeknes curs;
But if a mannes soule were in his purs;
For in his purs he scholde punyssched be.
"Purs is the ercedeknes helle," quod he.
But wel I woot he lyeth right in dede;
Of cursyng oweth ech gulty man to drede;
For curs wol slee right as assoillyng saveth;
And also ware him of a *significavit*.
In daunger he hadde at his owne assise
The yonge gurles of the diocise,
And knew here counseil, and was al here red.
A garland had he set upon his heed,
As gret as it were for an ale-stake;
A bokeler had he maad him of a cake.'

It is impossible to copy here the proof which this Sompnour is said to be ready to give of his good fellowship; but the coarse, vinous gaiety of the man, rascal as he is, helps, as so many of the touches in Chaucer's portraits do help, to make him just endurable for a few minutes' company on the highroad. In return for the Friar's tale, he gives us some picturesque hints of the part played by the Friars in English life. For example, here we have one friar begging, while the other writes down on a tablet the name of the giver:—

'In every hous he gan to pore and prye,
And beggyd mele or chese, or ellis corn.
His felaw had a staf typped with horn,
A payr of tablis al of yvory,
And a poyntel y-polischt fetisly,
And wroot the names alway as he stood
Of alle folk that gaf him eny good,
Ascaunce that he wolde for hem preye.
"Gif us a busshel whet, or malt, or reye,
A Goddes kichil [*cake*], or a trip of chese,
Or elles what yow list, we may not chese;
A Goddes halpeny, or a masse peny;
Or gif us of youre braune, if ye have eny,
A dagoun [*piece*] of your blanket, leeve dame,
Oure suster deer,—lo! her I write your name—
Bacoun or beef, or such thing as we fynde.'

The friar then goes to a house where he has been often 'refreshed' before, and where the husband is sick abed. That he is a frequent visitor appears from the husband's salutation: —

'"O deere maister," quod the seeke man,
"How have ye fare siththe March bygan?
I saygh yow nought this fourtenight or more."
"Got wot," quod he, "labord have I ful sore;
And specially for thy salvacioun
Have I sayd many a precious orisoun,
And for myn other frendes, God hem blesse.
I have to day ben at your chirche at messe . . .
And ther I seigh our dame, wher is she?"
"Yond in the yerd I trowe that sche be,"
Sayde this man, "and sche wil come anoon."'

The friar, I suppose, goes to find her: —

> ' " Ey, mayster, welcome be ye, by seint Johan ! "
> Sayde this wyf, " how fare ye hertily ? "
> The frere ariseth up ful curteysly,
> And her embracith in his armes narwe,
> And kist her swete and chirkith as a sparwe
> With his lippes.'

The dame assures him that he is right welcome, and communicates to him that her husband is very cross, as he lies in bed, although she does all she can do to comfort a sick man. For this, the Friar goes and rebukes the husband: —

> ' " Now maister," quod the wyf, " er that I go,
> What wil ye dine ? I will go theraboute."
> " Now, dame," quod he, " *jeo vous dy saunz doute*,
> Have I not of a capoun but a schivere,
> And of your softe brede but the lyvere,
> And after that a rostyd pigges heed,
> (But that I wold for me no best were deed)
> Than had I with yow homly suffisaunce.
> *I am a man of litel sustinaunce.*
> *My spirit hath his fostryng on the Bible.*' "

'A capon's liver, with a slice of soft bread, and a roasted pig's head, are all I want,—indeed, I would not that you should serve up your best for such as *me*. I live chiefly on Holy Writ."

III. Between monks, friars, clerks, and summoners, it is pretty clear that even after the satirist's or hu-

mourist's license has been handsomely allowed for, life in England must have been honeycombed with ecclesiastical meddling. The genius which too many of the Summoners probably had for winking at offences and taking bribes, appears so to have accustomed the people to take what may be called the gentlemanly view of vice that it was at last made a ground of complaint against the Lollards or Wickliffites, that in the City of London they played the part of 'bishops' in overseeing and punishing certain offences against public order. 'The Londoners at this time, trusting somewhat boldly to the Mayor's authority, who for that year was John of Northampton, took upon them the office of bishops in punishing the vices (belonging to the civil laws) of such persons as they had found, and apprehended as guilty of fornication or adultery. First, they put the women in the prison, which amongst them was named Dokum; and, lastly, bringing them into the market-place, where every man might behold them, and cutting off their golden locks from their heads, they caused them to be carried about the streets, with bag-pipes and trumpets blown before them, to the intent they should be the better known, and their company avoided—according to the manner of certain thieves that were named *appellatores* (accusers or impeachers of others that were guiltless), which were so served. And with other such opprobrious and reproachful contumelies did they serve the men also that were taken with them. Here the story (history) recordeth how

the said Londoners were encouraged hereunto by John Wycliffe, and others that followed his doctrine, to perpetrate this act, in reproach of the prelates; for they said that they did so much abhor to see the great negligence of those to whom that charge belonged, and that they did as much detest their greediness of money, being choked with bribes, and winking at the penalties due to such persons by the laws appointed, suffered such persons favourably to continue in their wickedness.' But it will be seen from an extract given from the *Liber Albus*, in another chapter, that if the Wickliffites urged John of Northampton and the City authorities to take any steps of this kind, they were only urging them to put in execution an already existing law.

I have repeatedly said that, in my opinion, the satirist, and even the humourist, when *grave* moral questions enter into the subject-matter, is as much to be distrusted as the romancist or the playwright. Neither of them can be called upon to give us more than *suggestions* for true pictures of the morals and manners of any given time. What good work the mediæval Church, and even the monastic and celibate institutions of that Church naturally did, or were providentially turned towards doing, is as much matter of record as the moral confusions which appear naturally to have been caused by the same institutions. I do not wish for a moment to be thought by the most casual readers to suppose that ridicule, or depreciation of even (what

seems to me) a most mistaken effort after holiness upon a falsely conceived pattern, is any part of my *métier*. But the kind of picture suggested by the woodcut at the head of this chapter—not the most suggestive that could have been selected—is one that often arrests the eye in the great mediæval gallery. The *Liber Albus* contains very marked provisions for the punishment of religious celibates who had broken their vows; and as late as the commencement of the fifteenth century,—I write this upon the authority of Hallam,—there was a mandate from a bishop of Exeter against the *marriage* of priests. In the reign of Henry II., the marriage of the parochial clergy in England is said to have been general. In spite of the difficulties which cling to that interpretation (as well as to others) it is impossible not to suspect that when, in the Reeve's Tale, the Reeve says of the thievish miller: —

> 'A wyf he hadde, come of noble kyn;
> The persoun of the toun hir fader was.
> . . . . . .
> Sche was i-fostryd in a nonnerye;'

Chaucer intended to convey the idea which lies upon the surface of the words. However that may be, scandals must have been frequent, and we can well conceive the vindictive spirit in which, they were regarded by 'lewed people,' who had occasionally to submit, for penance, to be flogged like little boys at

at Eton by ecclesiastics,—only with a stick instead of with the instrument in use at Eton. Piers Ploughman complains of this little institution as a degrading one; but his words are slightly too plain for me to copy here.

It is perhaps just worth while, before ending this chapter, to request the reader to notice the humorous double endings of one of the couplets quoted on page 214.

CHAPTER XVI.

TOWN AND COUNTRY.

We must return, with a little more fulness, to a topic already hinted at in these pages. It must be repeated that our forefathers were, so to speak, more intimate with the earth than we are; felt themselves nearer to it, considered as so much solid land bearing food and trees; with water clipping it round, and rivers running here and there, and living creatures moving over

it, like the birds, or upon it, like oxen, wolves, and 'grim leouny's.' I do not find it easy to express my meaning, but the reader's intelligent good will may do much to gather it. In the first place, as to the solid land itself, there was to the imagination of the fourteenth century, less of it. The telescope had not enlarged the idea of space to its present proportions, and there was (if the word may be pardoned) a snugness, a home feeling in men's thoughts of the earth, which can hardly be paralleled now, I suppose, except in the minds of very secluded agricultural people, chiefly women. Our ancestors appear to have felt towards the earth, as a child may feel to his own garden-plot. The idea of *appropriation* must have been vividly kept up by the frequency of conquests of territory, and by the arrangements of the feudal system. That portion of the surface of the earth, which was most familiar to an Englishman, was not covered with buildings, as it is now. In towns we scarcely think of the earth at all; our world is a world of houses; and even when we are away in the country, our imaginations suffer from the tyranny of the city. 'Attached to the soil;' what a volume of meaning is there in that feudal phrase! We can ourselves scarcely realise it: partly because the land is now in the hands of so few holders, and the tenures are different; and partly because we have become such manufacturers and traders. In the fourteenth century, Englishmen were necessarily more indebted

to the hospitality of the earth than now: they were more at the mercy of the winds and rains, and changing seasons, the harvests, the trees, and the rivers. To be often indebted to the forest-border for shelter, to burn turf-fires, to chop wood daily, to be familiar with living creatures of the field, the kine, the horses and the birds, gave a feeling of nearness to the tangible, visible world, which we can discern in their ways of speech and of acting, but which we cannot ourselves well have. We have so many resources! What a very different thing to shoot with a bow of yew from shooting with a rifle or a revolver! What a very different thing for 'the rude forefathers of the hamlet' to moulder away gradually under the churchyard grass, shone upon, rained upon, blown upon, and for the modern Englishman to be buried in an air-tight iron coffin, expressly contrived to defraud 'Mother Earth' of her due!

The feeling of near-relatedness to the earth, as if it were indeed a mother—a feeling, as if it were the house, farm-yard, and garden of humanity, and not conceivable without chimneys smoking from its surface, is very strong in the poetry of Chaucer. We do not find it nearly so strong in the writings of the Elizabethan age, though it was much stronger then than it is in our age of cities, boastful science, and boastful art, when we talk calmly of 'yoking and subduing Nature' to our ends. Although the phrase 'out of town,' intensely modern as it sounds, is good

Chaucer, it was used in his day with no such meaning as it now bears. It then signified going from a place of security, walled and fortified, upon a journey in which there was danger; but there was no city in England, it need hardly be said, so large, so thickly built, or so exclusive of field and garden, that the contrast between 'nature' and 'the city' could exist, with its modern intensity of signification. Nature, in the Wordsworthian sense, plays no part in Chaucer. The bent of his genius was objective of course, and he was only meditative as every poet must be. The great spectacle had sunk into his heart; and, being touched and awed by it, he could not but be meditative in a sense, and at times, as if a field in autumn were *conscious* of the lights and shades cast upon its bosom by the clear blue sky and the blown clouds between. But the key-note of his poetry is, no doubt, a joyous, homely intimacy with life in house and field, castle and garden, forest and river-side, with no conscious divarication of the scene into that which is nature and that which is not nature. The colours, and sounds, and odours, the fires, the roof-trees, the millers, the pretty buxom women, the gentle knights, the millers, and the friars, are all parts of the same picture. One mirror receives the entire scene:—

> 'There the river eddy whirls,
> And there the surly village churls,
> And the red cloaks of market girls . . . .

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,
An abbot on an ambling pad,
Sometimes a curly shepherd lad,
Or long-hair'd page in crimson clad,
Goes by to tower'd Camelot;
And sometimes thro' the mirror blue
The knights come riding two and two.'

And no voice of revelation comes from Nature. The poet loves natural objects of course, and makes them live, and have wills and passions of their own; but the life he puts into them is only an infusion of his own homely vitality. Let us take, as an instance, a passage in the Knight's Tale:—

'The busy larke, messager of daye,
Salueth in hire song the morwe gray,
And fyry Phoebus ryseth up so bright
That all the orient laugheth of the light,
And with his stremes dryeth in the greves,
The silver dropes, hongyng on the leeves.'

This is beautiful; the laughing of the earth at sunrise is a favourite quotation with us all, I suppose; but it is all homely; it is all the *face* of nature; it is buxom, brisk, and glad, but there is no undercurrent; the happy verse moves on like a palfrey, and we move with it, aroused to the action of the story. Thought of an inner secret or soul in nature there is none,—even if there is of a heart. My readers will not for a moment imagine that I am making any complaint, as of a deficiency in the poet; far otherwise, and I wish

more poets were like him; but the fact is what I now say. What Chaucer meant by Nature we may gather from a passage of much beauty, which occurs at the opening of the tale of the Doctor of Physic:—

'Fair was this mayde in excellent beaute
Above every wight that men may se;
For Nature hath with sovereyn diligence
I-formed hir in so gret excellence,
As though sche wolde say, "Lo, I, Nature,
Thus can I forme and peynte a creature,
Whan that me lust; who can me counterfete?
Pigmalion? Nought though he alwey forge and bete,
Or grave, or peynte; for I dar wel sayn,
Apelles, Zeuxis, schulde wirche in vayn,
Other to grave, or paynte, or forge or bete,
If thay presumed me to counterfete.
For He that is the Former principal
Hath maad me his viker general,
To forme and peynte erthely creature
Right as me lust, al thing is in my cure
Under the moone that may wane and waxe,
And for my werke no thing wol I axe;
My lord and I ben fully at accord.
I made hir to the worschip of my Lord;
So do I alle myn other creatures,
What colour that thay been, or what figures."
Thus semeth me that Nature wolde say.'

Perhaps, after reading this passage, the reader will think I have partly stultified my own comment by making the quotation. But I have not. A mind trained in the modern school, and always ready to slide

into a Wordsworthian mood, may possibly—though scarcely with entire honesty—*read into* what Chaucer says here, a meaning or a suggestion which Chaucer himself had not.* But the writing is here strictly objective. Nature is the bountiful vicar-general of God, joyful, liberal, asking nothing, and an obedient worker. The whole passage is more like a speech in a Morality Play than anything else; only it is the work of a poet. As a simple objective statement, truly given, it *covers* much that is profoundly true, but which never entered the head of Chaucer, and would not be understood by him if he were raised from the grave to hear it proposed by a disciple of Wordsworth. It is Chaucer's way of saying what a modern poet of the meditative school would have said very differently. I cannot remember a parallel passage in Wordsworth, and in Mr. Lowell there is a vivacity, often a grotesque-

* This practice is far too common in criticism of all kinds, including criticism of the Bible. I wish those who indulge in it would think, among other things, of the harm they do to themselves, since every act of insincerity tends permanently to cloud the mind. The error I am condemning is often excused upon the ground that the poet and the prophet are the subjects of an inspiration, and do not always know the whole meaning of their own words. And this is true, but it is not an excuse which fits the case. The question—what do certain words cover? is quite distinct from the question—what did the writer of them mean? What crudeness there was underneath Chaucer's phrase of vicar-general of God may be guessed by comparing this passage with a verse or two in his Assembly of Foules.

ness, of expression which is all his own; but note how much criticism there is, and altogether how much *arrière-pensée* in the following lines from the 'Vision of Sir Launfal,' which the reader may contrast with the last quotation from Chaucer:—

'Earth gets its price for what Earth gives us;
The beggar is taxed for a corner to die in,
The priest hath his fee who comes and shrives us,
We bargain for the graves we lie in;
At the devil's booth are all things sold,
Each ounce of dross costs its ounce of gold;
For a cap and bells our lives we pay,
Bubbles we earn with a whole soul's tasking:
'Tis heaven alone that is given away,
'Tis only God may be had for the asking,
There is no price set on the lavish summer,
And June may be had by the poorest comer.

And what is so rare as a day in June?
Then, if ever, come perfect days;
Then Heaven tries the earth if it be in tune,
And over it softly her warm ear lays:
Whether we look, or whether we listen,
We hear life murmur, or see it glisten;
Every clod feels a stir of might,
An instinct within it that reaches and towers,
And, grasping blindly above it for light,
Climbs to a soul in grass and flowers;
The flush of life may well be seen
Thrilling back over hills and valleys;
The cowslip startles in meadows green,
The buttercup catches the sun in its chalice,

And there's never a leaf or a blade too mean
To be some happy creature's palace;
The little bird sits at the door in the sun,
Atilt like a blossom among the leaves,
And lets his illumined being o'errun
With the deluge of summer it receives;
His mate feels the eggs beneath her wings,
And the heart in her dumb breast flutters and sings;
He sings to the wide world, and she to her nest,—
In the nice ear of Nature which song is the best?'

In these lines we have the joy of nature and the liberality of nature; but with what a difference! The antithesis of the modern poet is not, indeed, perfect; far from it, for it is not true that Earth, in the sense in which he uses the word, gets its price for what it gives us. Yet, allowing for this lubricity of phrase, we may discern, at a glance, a wide variation in the general idea. The poet says God may be had for the asking,—and what he means is, simply, that summer comes to all alike; which implies that God is *in* the summer. Heaven lays her ear over the earth in the fine warm weather. There is a life and an instinctive movement towards heaven in every clod. The life, —note this,—*climbs to a soul in the grass and the flowers.* One might push this view of comment much farther, and especially one might take in the sea, and ask where the *passion* of the sea — that striking element in modern poetry — appears in Chaucer and his peers. To critical readers, however, these things are common-places, and they have the right to show them-

selves here only as they stand related to the point of comparative nearness to nature. As far as I can make out, the modern sentiment for Nature, though its germ must of course have existed always in the human heart, is a very remote consequence of the increased civification of life as one factor, and of the tendency of the religious ideas to take wide counsel with the facts of life in proportion as the reliance on set creeds grows less and less. However, this is too much upon a collateral aspect of the idea with which the chapter opens, and we must pass on. It will be noted, meanwhile, that the modern feeling with respect to Nature is conspicuous by its absence in the two portraits which we are now approaching. So inveterate are our *own* feelings in the matter, that these types bring Nature by main force upon the page, because they live always in her very eye,—you smell the 'ay, as Carolina Wilhelmina Amelia Skeggs (?) said,—but Chaucer does not try, in his verse, to bring the sights, and sounds, and odours of the country upon the scene when he introduces two countrymen. There was no reason why he should; his portraits are rapid sketches painted in upon a ground of good fellowship; but then a modern poet would not have been able to help doing something of the kind.*

* The reader may refer — making the needful allowances — to Wordsworth's 'Reverie of Poor Susan,' and 'Farmer of Tilsbury Vale;' and he may compare the first four lines of the 'Canterbury Tales' with the first three paragraphs of Keats's 'Endymion.'

II. Why is it that the cultivated Englishman, in particular the man of letters, has usually cherished a weakness for the country gentleman which he has never felt for the town gentleman? Bourgeois is a term of dislike, which has found a modern equivalent in Philistine, and we can hardly set-off bumpkin against it on the other side of the case. I think the reason, or great part of the reason, is that the man of letters, being usually a man of the city, has a peculiar relish of the *bonhomie* of the country gentleman or Franklin, which presents itself to his mind softened by the distance which lends enchantment. There is *bonhomie* in town as well as in country, and John Gilpin is as simple-hearted as Sir Roger de Coverley; but it is difficult to pick him out of Cheapside or Ludgate, while Sir Roger stands conspicuous in his manor-house in the midst of his acres and his tenantry, like a tree that stands by a hedge-row. The originalities of his character are innocent and pleasant, like gables on a roof that let light into bed-rooms.

The Franklin, or gentleman farmer, is one of the pleasantest pictures in the whole series of the Canterbury Pilgrims. His face is ruddy, from the country air, and his beard as white as a daisy. He delights in a sop of wine early in the morning, and believing in St. Julian, the patron saint of hospitality, he keeps a 'table dormant' (or permanent), and it snows meat and drink in his house. He changes the courses at dinner and supper—baked meat and boiled par-

tridges, and bream and pike. His cook has to keep his wits and his tools and spices handy. He is a magistrate, and a knight of the shire. He has a silken purse, and carries the 'knife harnessed,' which is permitted to his estate:—

'A Frankeleyn ther was in his companye;
Whit was his berde, as the dayesye.
Of his complexioun he was sangwyn.
Wel loved he in the morn a sop of wyn.
To lyve in delite was al his wone,
For he was Epicurius owne sone,
That heeld opynyoun that pleyn delyt
Was verraily felicite perfyt.
An househaldere, and that a gret, was he;
Seynt Julian he was in his countré.
His breed, his ale, was alway after oon;
A bettre envyned man was nowher noon.
Withoute bake mete was never his hous,
Of fleissch and fissch, and that so plentyvous,
It snewed in his hous of mete and drynk,
Of alle deyntees that men cowde thynke.
Aftur the sondry sesouns of the yeer,
He chaunged hem at mete and at soper.
Ful many a fat partrich had he in mewe,
And many a brem and many a luce in stewe.
Woo was his cook, but if his sauce were
Poynant and scharp, and redy al his gere.
His table dormant in his halle alway
Stood redy covered al the longe day.
At sessions ther was he lord and sire.
Ful ofte tyme he was knight of the schire.
An anlas and a gipser al of silk
Heng at his gerdul, whit as morne mylk.'

Although I have said that his face was ruddy from the country air, it will be observed that Chaucer simply mentions the ruddiness, and is intent upon the man's epicurean habits and hospitality, carefully observing that he was a well 'envyned' man, *i.e.*, one whose stock of wine was well laid in. The type is not yet extinct in the same class, I apprehend!

III. The Poor Parson's brother, the Ploughman—and it is a pathetic touch to make the parson's brother a labouring man, even poorer than himself—is another study of the good, well-wearing English virtues. He was very poor, for he rode upon a mare (not a respectable thing to do in the middle ages), and had to ditch, and delve, and thrash hard for his living. Yet, he not only paid his tithes exactly, but helped his neighbours with willing labour whenever he could. He does credit to his brother's teaching and example, for whether he gains or loses, he loves God and his fellows, and lives in peace and perfect charity:—

'With him ther was a Ploughman, his brothere,
That hadde i lad of dong ful many a fothur.
A trewe swynker and a good was hee,
Lyvynge in pees and parfight charitie.
God loved he best with al his trewe herte
At alle tymes, though him gained or smerte,
And thanne his neighebour right as himselve.
He wolde threisshe, and therto dyke and delve,
For Cristes sake, with every pore wight,
Withouten huyre, if it laye in his might.

His tythes payede he ful faire and wel,
Bathe of his owne swynk and his catel.
In a tabbard he rood upon a mere.'

And here one is reminded of a topic in connexion with the countryman or clown which the spread of culture and the increasing facilities of intercommunition have done something to throw into the background. When Thomas Warton wrote the poem (supposed to be indited in Whichwood Forest) entitled 'The Hamlet,' it was the fashion to attribute to the clown not only a joy in nature which it is certain very few clowns possess, but also the virtues of simplicity and remoteness of life. In or about Chaucer's time we do not find the joy in nature obtruded, but we do find the simplicity; and we may as well pause for a moment upon a theme, which was a popular one, at least as late as the days when George III. was king.

The experience of a countryman going up to a great city has always been a favourite topic with balladists. And the ancient ballad, 'London Lackpenny,' exhibits all the usual characteristics of such compositions. The countryman comes up to town—from Kent, of course, every body seeming to come from Kent in those days, except the outlandish knights and the uplandish churls—and misses in the usual way the hospitality and readiness to trust a man which he had been accustomed to in the country. Lackpenny, when he proceeds to London, expects that 'truth in

no wise should be faint;' in other words, knowing that the seat of justice is near London, he expects to get it. In Westminster Hall he finds 'clerkes a great rout,' and an officer of the court stands up and cries out, 'Richard, Robert, and John of Kent.' Kent again, of course; but though this excites the countryman's expectations, he finds he can do nothing without money. He tries the Common Law Courts and Chancery Courts, always with the same result, namely, that justice will have to be paid for. Finding that nobody 'within this Hall, neither rich or poor, would do for him ought, though he should die,' he goes out into the street, where he finds that people are ready enough to take his money, though nobody will give him anything—the old story exactly. In making his way through the crowd at Westminster Hall he had lost his hood. When he comes to Cornhill he sees his own hood hanging up for sale—a kind of joke which one has seen repeated in farces and story-books a hundred times. The end of it is, that he has to go back to Kent exactly as he left it, exclaiming—

> 'Now Jesus, that in Bethlem was bore,
> Save London, and send true lawyers their meed,
> For whoso wants money with them shall not speed.'

Stowe's description of this ballad, under the head of 'Candlewick Street Ward,' conveys a very good general impression of it, but, incredible as it may appear, it contains two palpable errors. He says in

the text, and repeats in a marginal note, that 'in Westcheap Lackpenny was called on to buy fine lawn,' and so on, but that 'no silks were spoken of'—which is an error; for Lydgate's words are, 'velvet sylke, and lawne.' This error has been pointed out before, but Stowe makes another, for he says that in the end Lackpenny 'gat him into Gravesend barge, and home into Kent.' But Lackpenny expressly says in the ballad, that though he prayed the bargeman 'for God's sake' to 'spare him his expense,' the bargeman refused—

'Thus lacking I could not speed.'

And then he goes back into Kent, necessarily on foot, over London Bridge, because he had spent all his money in London.

IV. The return of Lackpenny to the good green county of Kent brings *back* the grass, the trees, and the flowers to the page, on which I write, because my desk happens to be spread in the city; but the circle within which there were no inrunnings of the grass or the trees in London, was very small in the days of Lackpenny.

In the London that now is, we have had a sharp fight to get a few spaces enclosed and taken care of as common gardens for our crowded populations. These are very pretty and creditable, and so are some of the minor parks in the suburbs. It is not impossible, judging from the care which seems to be bestowed on

the garden which surrounds the Tower moat, the resolute stand that was made for the preservation of the green enclosure in Finsbury Circus, the planting of certain churchyards—for instance, St. Mary-le-Strand—with trees, and other circumstances of a similar kind, that the number of green spots within the metropolis may be greatly increased, notwithstanding the value of ground there. Let me venture the prophecy that it will; but in the meantime we seem likely to have a sharp fight for our commons and open spaces. It appears absurd to speak of London as a city of gardens, yet it is well known that William Fitzstephen, Monk of Canterbury, but a well-born citizen of London, and proud of his birth-place, writing in the reign of Henry II., described London as that precise thing—a city of gardens. He says;—'Adjoining to the houses on all sides lie the gardens of those citizens that dwell in the suburbs' (a phrase which had a different force in Fitzstephen's time from what it has now), 'which are well furnished with trees, spacious and beautiful.' 'That most excellent river, the Thames, abounds with fish. On the north side of the city are fields for pasture, and a delightful plain of meadow-land, interspersed with flowing streams, on which stand mills, whose clack is very pleasing to hear. Close by lies an immense forest, in which are densely wooded thickets, the coverts of game, stags, fallow-deer, boars, and wild bulls. The tillage-lands of the city are not barren gravelly soil, but like the fertile

plains of Asia, which produce abundant crops, and fill the barns of their cultivators. There are also round London, on the north sides, in the suburbs, excellent springs, the water of which is clear, sweet, and salubrious,' 'lapping the shore as they flow over the shining pebbles;' * amongst which Holywell, Clerkenwell, and St. Clement's Well (*fons Sacer, fons Clericorum, fons Sancti Clementis*) are of most note, and most frequently visited, as well by the scholars from the schools as by the youth of the city, when they go out to take the air in the summer evenings.'

I will not go out of my way to extract any obvious joke out of going to Clerkenwell for fresh air on a summer's evening. Down as late as the time of Addison we know that there was good air as near to St. Paul's, for Sir Roger de Coverley hemmed loudly in Gray's Inn, because 'he liked to clear his pipes in good air,' and the fresh breeze from Hampstead blew straight down upon him while he was waiting for the 'philosopher.' But what is this to the garden of the Earl of Lincoln, which stood on the site of Lincoln's Inn? From an account of the Earl's bailiff, dating close upon the commencement of the fourteenth century, we find that in that garden, twenty acres square, there were so many roses grown that a large number of them could be sold to a profit; all the usual fruits of an

* Fontes præcipui aqua dulci, salubri, perspicua, et
Per claros rivo trepidante lapillos.'

English orchard in great abundance—kitchen-garden plants, hemp, some acid plants, which yielded verjuice, —an important article in the domestic economy of the middle ages, as we may gather from the frequency with which it is mentioned in a casual way, as it still is, or lately was, by the common people, especially the peasantry, among whom 'as sour as vergis' is a common expression. This garden had a fence and a ditch round it, like the poor widow's 'yerde,' and a pond for pike in the centre.

Stowe is a late authority, but it is in the highest degree tantalising to hear him talking of a farm existing in his youth 'towards Aldgate,' in connexion with 'an abbey of nuns of the order of St. Clare, called the Minories, founded by Edmond, Earl of Lancaster, Leycester, and Derbie, brother to King Edward III.' 'At this farm,' says Stowe, 'I myself in my youth have fetched many a halfpenny worth of milk, and never had less than three ale pints for a halfpenny in the summer, nor less than one ale quart for a halfpenny in the winter—always hot from the kine, as the same was milked and strained. One Trollop, and afterwards Goodman, were the farmers there, and had thirty or forty kine to the pail. Goodman's son being heir to his father's purchase, let out the ground, first for grazing of horses, and then for garden-plots, and lived like a gentleman thereby.' He next proceeds to describe changes then recent in the City-ditch:—'On the other side of that street lieth the ditch without the walls of the

city, which of old time used to be open, always from time to time cleansed from filth and mud, as need required, of great breadth, and so deep that divers watering-horses, where they thought it shallowest, were drowned, both horse and man. But now of late time the same ditch is enclosed, and the banks thereof let out for garden-plots, carpenter's yards, bowling-alleys, and divers houses thereon built, whereby the city wall is hidden, the ditch filled up, a small channel left, and that very shallow.' Then, going on with his description, he refers to 'the parish church of St. Buttolph,' and says that east from this parish church there were 'fair inns up towards Hog Lane end, somewhat within the bars:'—'Within these forty years, Hog Lane had on both sides fair hedgerows of elms, with pleasant bridges and easy stiles to pass over into the pleasant fields, very commodious for citizens therein to walk, shoot, or otherwise to recreate and refresh their dull spirits in the sweet and wholesome air, which is now within a few years made a continual building throughout of garden-houses and small cottages.'

'Bridges and easy stiles to pass over into the pleasant fields!' 'Very commodious for the citizens to recreate and refresh their spirits in the sweet and wholesome air!' Nothing that railways can do for us, nothing, at all events, that they have yet promised, and perhaps not even a line that would take us into Arden in five minutes, could recompense us for what we have lost in the civification of the 'farm belonging

to the said nunnery, the fair hedgerows,' and the like. It is pleasant to be able easily and cheaply, at a hundred miles away, to see Trollope or Goodman, with the thirty or forty kine to the pail; but this does not make amends for the horrible modern transmogrification of Goodman's Fields. The charm lies in *being near* Trollope and the kine, and the elm-trees, and the pleasant fields—not when you want to, but whether you want or not; to put it differently and more truly, the charm lies in their being near you. We all feel this when we go out of town — for we always feel mere uneasy visitors till we have slept in the new place, and woke in the morning to look out upon the grey remote sea, or the near-lying meadow, beyond which we know there are meadows and meadows, further than the eye can see, or Dobbin can trot in a day. We realise the difference, too, when we walk in a city like Rochester, which seems as if it had been laid down upon the green earth, and might be removed; at least, so far as the houses are concerned—a Castle, a Cathedral, and a Priory, are other matters. But when the grass comes pushing close up to the very walls of a place, now overlooking the streets from a hill, on the top of which a white windmill is talking to itself—now thrusting in fresh, sinuous tongues of verdure, that wander into the streets, like the back-water of a tide,—a feeling that the whole of the buildings are insignificant, and out of place, and that the only real things are the everlasting grass, and the

friendly green trees, with their large blown tops, inevitably comes over us. It is true, when we return to the household fire—especially if the fire be turf, filling the house with an odour, as of burnt sacrifice of the woodland—we feel that the earth is for a habitation for the sons of men, and that we have not possessed it till we have tilled it and built upon it, and the earth-smoke goes up to heaven for a witness, and an invocation. But not all the shelter, the art, the resource, the splendour of a city, reconciles us to the sensation that we have to go to Nature to seek her, and time and portion out our commerce with her, instead of lying at her feet, visited at her will by the waftings of her green garment, the breath and music of her sweet winds, and the rustling and tossing of her gonfalons of willow, and acacia, birch and beech, wych-elm and poplar.

This, to imitate Chaucer's way of returning upon himself when he has a little forsaken the straight path, may seem a needlessly wordy way of saying that it is pleasant to live in a city which has not been forsaken by the country. But if there are any of my readers who do not understand the *passion* of trees and green fields; who agree with Boswell that the Strand is much better than Blackheath Park (to which Dr. Johnson replies, 'Why, yes, sir'), if I have readers who cannot even be excited by the information that in the days of Elizabeth a garden in Holborn produced so many roses that the Bishop of Ely, when he gave

the place to the Lord Chancellor Hatton, retained the right of gathering there, every year, twenty bushels of them, perhaps they may be touched by a very brief quotation from Shakespeare's King Richard III., Act 3, Scene iv., in which the Duke of Gloucester (afterwards Richard III.) says to the Bishop of Ely: —

> 'My Lord of Ely, when I was last in Holborn,
> I saw good strawberries in your garden there,
> I do beseech you send for some of them.'

And the strawberries seem to have got into the Bishop of Ely's head; for he says to the Archbishop of Canterbury in the first scene of King Henry V.:—

> 'The strawberry grows underneath the nettle,'

as if he thought a good deal of them. But even strawberry beds do not make so brilliant a picture in the mind as crocus beds. In the ninth year of Edward III. the Bishop of Ely gave 'forty acres of land, in the suburbs of London, in the parish of St. Andrew, in Oldborne, to the Prior and Convent of Ely; and Saffron Hill gets its name by tradition from the crocus-gardens of this Priory. It has been said that Holborn Hill, because it is a hill, is the place, of all places in London, which reminds you that there was once green turf, unbuilt on, where now there are well-smoked bricks and mortar, and the quarrelsome,

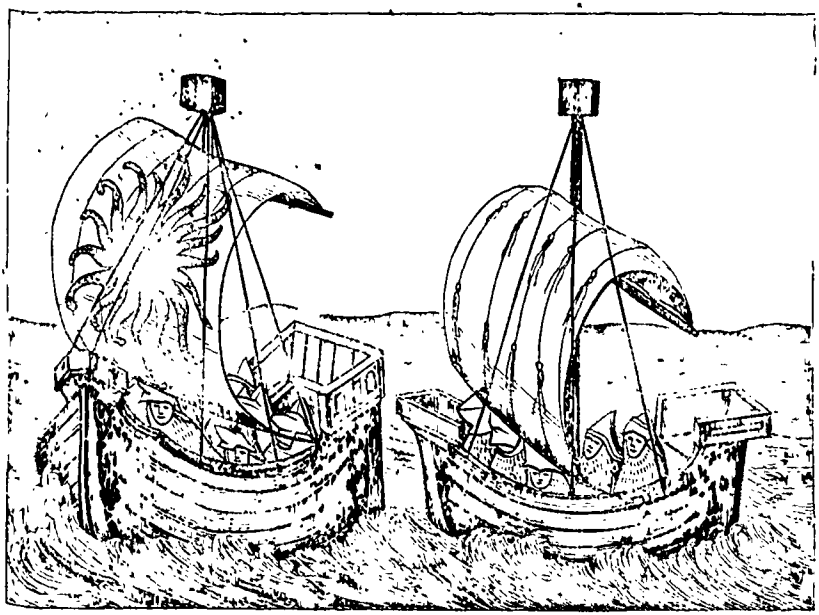
incessant noise of carts and hackney-coaches. At all events, it is interesting to think that this hill was once a pleasant, exposed declivity, where the little crocus flowers lay in a sheet of gold in the sun of spring. It is true, we come down to prose when we learn that the monks got their saffron out of the crocus beds.* Stowe says that his father had a garden in Throgmorton Street. There is still a pleasant piece of garden ground behind Drapers' Hall, where lovely women may be seen flitting about, lightly dressed, in the warm of the summer evenings, on the highdays and holydays of the Drapers' Company; at least, when a boy, I saw many a pretty little pageant of this kind, and looked with awe at the gorgeous women, as they swept up and down the alleys on the fine evenings, while the lights were beginning to sparkle through the hall windows. If there are those who care more for grapes than for strawberries,—it is very unlikely, for most of us are of the opinion of the man who said slily, 'God *might* have made a better berry, but He never did,'—let their mouths water when they hear that such names as Vine Street, Westminster, and Vine Street, Saffron Hill, and Vine

* Saffron was supposed to be a very excellent cordial, capable of exhilarating the spirits to such a degree as to occasion immoderate mirth, involuntary laughter, and the ill effects which follow from the abuse of spirituous liquors. It was supposed to be particularly good for hysterical depression; and, better than all, it was a cordial which yielded the whole of its virtue to any wine in which it might be infused.

Street, Drury Lane, are not strokes of humour in street nomenclature, but point to the fact that vineyards, belonging to the Priories of Westminster and Ely, did once exist between Smithfield and Pimlico, and did actually yield wine for the drinking of the Prelates and Abbots of Westminster and Ely. It is not difficult for a man, who wanders as far as he can into the heart of the purlieux of Westminster Abbey, to imagine, as he stands in that old garden there, with the well in the midst, that the Abbot's orchard and vinery are close at hand somewhere, with a pond, fringed by fallen leaves blown from the beeches, and peopled by delicious fish — so strong is the sense that comes over you of shade and monastic stillness, and light subdued by verdure. Only you hear no chanting, and see no tonsured friar, and the silence of the place is not made into a cathedral silence, and deepened into a sort of audible brown twilight, by the cawing of rooks.

However, you must either be at a great distance from London, or must possess a lively imagination, to conceive of the English capital as a place of gardens, such as it was in the time of the Plantagenets. Within my own memory, the area within which roses will not grow in the metropolis has been widening and widening in the most odious manner, in every direction. The great brick-giant marches out towards the fields; the roses fly before him; and you have to go nearly out of the sound of Big Ben to see gardens no

sweeter and gayer than lay under the shadow of St. Paul's and the Savoy Palace in the days of John of Gaunt. These things are commonplaces; but let us weep while we may! When we have dried our eyes we will turn to the cold comfort proffered by those who remind us that grass will grow anywhere, and by Leigh Hunt, who puts us off with the melancholy consolation that there is not a street in London from which you cannot see a tree,—*a* tree! Better is it to turn to the Temple enclosure, with its stillness, its coolness, its beautiful lawn, and its beautiful chrysanthemums. There *is* a tradition about red and white rosebuds in that neighbourhood, but ——



CHAPTER XVII.

TRADE AND TRAVEL.

THE Shipman, or Sailor, is a picture which the modern eye at once recognises as true. Dartmouth has long ceased to be a port of such consequence that it is natural to make a sailor hail from it; but a seaman's horsemanship was then pretty much what it is now.—'He rode *as he could*,' in a cloth tunic reaching

to his knee, and carried a knife slung to his side. His skin was brown with the warmth of many suns and the chafing of many winds. He was a deep drinker, had the conscience of a good fellow, and no other, and was, above all things, an expert in tides and shoals, and currents and harbours. His beard had been shaken in many a tempest, but he was skilled in 'lodemenage,' *i. e.* he was a good pilot, and he had weathered them all: —

'A Schipman was ther, wonyng fer by weste;
For ought I woot, he was of Dertemouthe.
He rood upon a rouncy, as he couthe,
In a gowne of faldyng to the kne.
A dagger hangyng on a laas hadde he
Aboute his nekke under his arm adoun.
The hoote somer had maad his hew al broun;
And certeinly he was a good felawe.
Ful many a draught of wyn had he drawe
From Burdeux-ward, whil that the chapman sleep.
Of nyce conscience took he no keep.
If that he foughte, and hadde the heigher hand.
By water he sente hem hoom to every land.
But of his craft to rikne wel the tydes,
His stremes and his dangers him bisides,
His herbergh and his mone, his lodemenage,
Ther was non such from Hull to Cartage.
Hardy he was, and wys to undertake;
With many a tempest hadde his berd ben schake.
He knew wel alle the havenes, as thei were,
From Scotlond to the cape of Fynestere,
And every cryk in Bretayne and in Spayne;
His barge y-clepud was the Magdelayne.'

This is certainly a very characteristic picture. The 'good fellow' taps the wine he carries, while the merchant is asleep, and that is not the only instance of his recklessness, for, when he enters into a fight at a sea, he sends his defeated enemies home by water. The touch about his beard —

'With many a tempest had his beard been shook'—

is in Chaucer's best manner. The poet seizes upon a very simple matter of experience in a high wind,—the blowing aside of the hair or the beard,—and at one stroke makes for us a picture of his shipman or captain in a storm at sea, and compels us to think of the rough fellow as a hero in his way, and not alien to the great forces of nature, though he had a conscience that was not 'nice.'

II. The Merchant is a type not so easy to adjust to modern ideas of his vocation. He wears a forked beard, after the best fashion of his time, and he is dressed in motley! A broad Flanders beaver hat is on his head, and his boots are handsome. He understands the exchanges, so as to be able to negotiate his coins or 'shields' to advantage, and he is jealous of keeping up his credit, as all merchants are. It is chiefly in his dress and solemnity of speech that this Merchant is strange to us: —

'A Marchaunt was ther with a forked berd,
In motteleye, and high on horse he sat,
Uppon his heed a Flaundrisch bever hat;

His botus clapsud faire and fetously.
His resons he spak ful solempnely,
Sownynge alway the encres of his wynnyng.
He wolde the see were kepud for eny thinge
Betwixe Middulburgh and Orewelle.
Wel couthe he in eschange scheeldes selle.
This worthi man ful wel his witte bisette ;
Ther wiste no man that he was in dette,
So estately was he of governaunce,
With his bargayns, and with his chevysaunce.
For sothe he was a worthi man withalle,
But soth to say, I not what men him calle.'

This apology for not knowing the man's name—'I not (do not know) what men him call'—is a very quaint natural touch, but it was probably the rhyme that suggested it—poets are but men!—just as it was evidently the rhyme that gave the Friar his name of 'Huberd.' However, to pass on, I may recall to the reader's mind the fact that the commerce of England was a subject that energetically occupied the minds of Englishmen in the fourteenth century. In the latter part of the reign of the first Edward, the Society of Merchant Adventurers was instituted, and in the time of Chaucer attempts were made, in one of which he shared in the capacity of a royal commissioner, to extend the commerce of this country. To trading companies there is a reference in the Man of Law's Tale:—

'In Surrie dwelled whilom a companye
Of chapmen riche, and therto sad and trewe,

That wyde where sent her spycerye,
Clothes of gold, and satyn riche of hewe.
Her chaffar was so thrifty and so newe,
That every wight had deynté to chaffare
With hem, and eek to selle hem of here ware.'

And in the same place there is a happy description or characterization of the Merchant:—

'O riche marchaundz, ful of wele be ye,
O noble prudent folk as in this cas,
Youre bagges beth nat fuld with ambes ass,
But with sys synk, that renneth on your chaunce;
At Crystemasse wel mery may ye daunce.
Ye seeke land and see for youre wynnynges,
As wyse folk as *ye knowe alle thastates*
Of regnes, ye be fadres of tydynges,
Of tales, bothe of pees and of debates.'

This is, in three lines, an exact parallel to the type Mr. Disraeli has given us in Sidonia—who, being 'wise,' knows 'all the state of kingdoms;' and is 'father of tidings,' having earlier news than the Foreign Office, both of 'peace and war.'

III. I do not know how I can possibly give the reader a better idea, vague as that idea must be, of the commerce of the times and of the kind of speculations in which merchants, traders, and political economists, occupied themselves in, or shortly after, the fourteenth century, than by quoting some verses from a very curious poem, edited by Mr. Wright in a volume of

the 'Political Poems and Songs' issued under the direction of the Master of the Rolls. The poem was written immediately after the siege of Calais, in 1436, in which the English defeated the Duke of Burgundy —an event which probably caused more excitement in England at that time than would a siege of Gibraltar now. The ballad on the 'Siege of Calais' itself, which precedes this queer poem, entitled 'The Libel (little book) of English Policy,' with which I am mainly concerned, contains two passages so interesting that I am tempted to quote them. The opening lines seem to me very pretty:—

'In Juyl, whan the sone schon,
Tres, levys, and herbis grene,
Wyth many sonder colowris,
And ffresch flowris that April mad,
Gan for to feynt and to fad
Of lusty colowris and of swete odowris;
And fruyte on tre both gret and smale
Gan for to rip and wex fulle pale;
Than comyth tyme off labowr.'

And this burlesque incident, that the besiegers brought 9000 cocks to crow at night, and 8000 cressets to burn light: —

'Ix. m^{l} cokkes to crow at nygth,
And viii m^{l} cressetes to brene ligth,
Gret wonder to her and se!'

is a specimen of the caricature of the time, which I could not bring myself to omit.

The 'Libel of English Policy' is a prolonged and detailed exposition of the argument, political and commercial, which is expounded in the heading of the poem:—

'The trewe processe of Englysh polycye,
Of utterwarde to kepe thys regne in rest
Of oure England, that no man may denye,
Nere say of soth but one of the best
Is thys, that who seith southe, northe, est, and west,
Cheryshe marchandyse, kepe thamyralté,
That we bee maysteres of the narrowe see.'

It proceeds to say that Dover and Calais ought to be considered the keys of English success in war and trade, and should be guarded as if they were two eyes:—

'Ffor Sigesmonde the grete emperoure,
Whyche yet regneth, whan he was in this londe
Wyth kynge Herry the v^to^, prince of honoure,
Here moche glorye as hym thought he founde;
A myghty londe, whyche hadde take on honde
To werre in Ffraunce and make mortalité,
And evere welle kept rounde-aboute the see.

And to the kynge thus he seyde, "My brothere,"
Whan he perceyved too townes Calys and Dovere,
"Of alle youre townes to chese of one and othere,
"To kepe the see and sone to come overe
"To werre oughtwardes and youre regne to recovere,
"Kepe these too townes, sire, and youre magesté,
"As youre tweyne eyne to kepe the narowe see."

Ffor if this see be kepte in tyme of werre,
Who cane here passe withought daungere and woo?
Who may eschape, who may myschef dyfferre?
What marchaundye may for by be agoo?
Ffor nedes hem muste take truse every ffoo,
Fflaundres, and Spayne, and othere, trust to me,
Or ellis hyndered alle for thys narowe see.'

The writer then makes a very interesting reference to a coin which we frequently hear in Chaucer and his contemporaries—the noble. He observes, that when King Edward the First had the noble struck, he intended, by placing a ship on one side, and a sword and crown on the other, to indicate the martial and nautical supremacy of England as a first object of English effort:—

'Ffor iiij. thynges our noble sheueth to me,
Kyng, shype, and swerde, and pouer of the see.

Where bene oure shippes! where bene oure swerdes become?
Owre enmyes bid for the shippe sette a shepe.
Allas! oure reule halteth, hit is benome;
Who dare weel say that lordeshyppe shulde take kepe?
I wolle asaye, thoughe myne herte gynne to wepe,
To do thys werke, yf we wole ever the,
Ffor verry shame, to kepe aboute the see.

Shalle any prynce, what so be hys name,
Wheche hathe nobles moche lyche oures,
Be lorde of see, and Fflemmyngis to oure blame

Stoppe us, take us, and so make fade the floures
Of Englysshe state, and disteyne oure honnoures?
Ffor cowardyse, allas! hit shulde so be;
Therfore I gynne to wryte now of the see.'

The only things that may puzzle an unaccustomed reader in those two verses are the words *reule*—rule; *benome*—taken away; and, perhaps, the play upon the words ship and sheep. The writer then passes on to the detail of his arguments, and long as the extract may appear, I do not know how to omit any of that portion of the poem which I give. There are very few words which are not at once intelligible. Iren—iron; wolle —wool; wadmole (sometimes found as *wadmal*) is pilot-cloth; and the words *gotefel* and *kydefel* are instances of that large class of words in which, though the spelling disguises the meaning, the sense is immediately found by pronouncing the word. A hundredth part of the application that is usually devoted to a conundrum enables the least familiar reader to recognise in those poems the perfectly intelligible goat-fell, and kid-fell (fell—fleece, or the skin with the hair on):—

'Knowe welle alle men that profites in certayne,
Commodytés called, commynge out of Spayne,
And marchandy, who so wylle wete what that is,
Bene fygues, raysyns, wyne bastarde, and dates;
And lycorys, Syvyle oyle, and grayne,
Whyte Castelle sope, and wax, is not in vayne;
Iren, woole, wadmole, gotefel, kydefel also,
Ffor poynt-makers fulle nedefulle be the ij.;

Saffron, quiksilver, wheche arne Spaynes marchandy,
Is into Fflaundres shypped fulle craftylye,
Unto Bruges, as to here staple fayre,
The haven of Sluse here havene for here repayre,
Wheche is cleped Swyn, thaire shyppes gydynge,
Where many wessell and fayre arne abydynge.
But these merchandes, wyth there shyppes greet,
And suche chaffare as they bye and gette
By the weyes, most nede take one honde
By the costes to passe of oure Englonde,
Betwyxt Dover and Calys, thys is no doute,
Who can weelle ellis suche mater bringe aboute.
And whenne these seyde marchauntz discharged be
Of marchaundy in Fflaundres neere the see,
Than they be charged agayn wyth marchaundy
That to Fflaunders bougeth full nychelye,
Ffyne clothe of Ipre, that named is better than oure is,
Cloothe of Curtryke, fyne cloothe of alle coloures,
Moche ffustyane and also lynen cloothe.
But ye Fflemmyngis, yf ye be not wrothe,
The grete substaunce of youre cloothe, at the fulle,
Ye wot ye make hit of youre Englissh wolle.'

The poet goes on to note that though Spain produces wool, that wool is not good unless it be 'menged' (mixed) with English wool, and that the 'wolle of Englonde susteyneth the Flemmyngis' also. Now—

'Spayne and Fflaundres is as yche othere brothere,
And nethere may well lyve wythowght othere;'

and neither can do without England; therefore if England is master of the narrow sea—which she can only do by retaining Calais to match Dover, and make a

blockade easy—she can ruin either Flanders or Spain, or both (if necessary for her own protection), by keeping one from the other, and both from her own coasts, Q. E. D.:—

> 'Fflaundres of nede must wyth us have pease,
> Or ellis he is distroyde, wythowght lees (*reprieve*) . . .
> Yf these ij londes comene not togedere . . . .
> What is than Spayne? . . . . the thryfte is ago:
> Ffor the lytelle londe of Fflaundres is
> But a staple to other londes, iwys,
> And alle that groweth in Fflaundres, greyn and sede,
> May not a moneth ffynde hem mete of brede.
> Thus moste hem sterve, or wyth us most have pease.'

The author thus notices the energetic pains which in various ways Edward III. took to protect and encourage English commerce—and here again we get a glimpse of the importance of Dartmouth in those days. Then we have passed in review the exports of Brittany and Scotland, the latter being chiefly skins. Then the Flemings get their beer from Prussia—and there are some excessively dirty lines about them; repeating not only the tradition of their drinking habits, but something else, in terms which show that then, as more recently, they were not liked in commerce. The Jannays (Genoese) trade to England in 'grete carekkis' (carracks) heavily laden with the 'clothes of gold, silke, *pepir blake* . . . . and good gold of Genoa,' which they exchange for our cloth and wool, and those they take to Flanders. Then the 'grete galees of Venees and

Fflorence be wel lodene wyth *thynges of complacence*' —sweet wines, spices, apes, japes, and marmusettes taylede (tailed marmosets); and for those 'nifles and trifles,' which England could well do without, it irks the poet that the Venetians should carry off our gold and our own more solid commodities. And then comes a passage which will remind the modern reader of a humorous, but rather rough passage in Peter Plymley about locking up all the continent of Europe—no, I will not quote it. But how about physic? inquires our poet. What shall we do if we dispense with the rhubarb, senna, and scammony that the Venetians and Florentines bring us? Well, says he, with 'wytte and practike,' we may supply their place on our own soil:—

> 'I knowe thynges also spedefulle,
> That growene here . . . . .
> *Lett of this matere no man be dysmayde,*
> *But that a man may voyde infirmytee,*
> Without degrees (?) fet fro beyonde the see.'

After administering this drop of consolation, he suggests that there is one thing for which we might continue to be indebted to the Italians:—

> 'And yett there shulde excepte be ony thing,
> It were but sugre . . . . .
> In this mater I wole not ferther prese.'

This is not bad. We *may* grow our own physic, but how shall we sweeten our ypocras without the help

of the Italians? Then we have what the poet calls 'ensampelles of the deseytte' of these Italian traders, yet they are what would now be held quite within the limits of fair trading. It was quite innocent, in the modern eye, to buy tin and wool of England upon long credit, and then to go and sell them to the Flemings for cash, afterwards lending out the profit at interest. The poet, however, flinches with pious horror from the bare notion of these 'deseytes'—though Edward III. was then, and died, in debt to the Venetian bankers for money supplied in aid of his French wars. 'And thus' says this virtuous political economist:—

> 'And thus they wold, if we will beleve,
> Wypen our nose with our owne sleve.'

After some more of the same colour, the writer 'castes to speke a lytelle of wylde Iryshe, wyth an incident of Walys.' From Ireland came stags' and other skins, woollen, linen, salmon; and here I must really quote again:—

> 'The Yriche men have cause lyke to oures
> Oure londe and herres togedre defende,
> That none enmye shulde hurte ne offende
> Yrelonde ne us, but as one comonté
> Shulde helpe to kepe welle aboute the see.
> Ffor they have havenesse grete and godely bayes,
> Sure, wyde, and depe, of gode assayes,
> Att Waterforde and coostis monye one,
> And as men seyn in England, be there none

Better havenesse shyppes in to ryde,
Ne more sure for enmyes to abyde.
Why speke I thus so muche of Yrelonde?
Ffor also muche as I can understonde
It is fertyle for thynge that there do growe
And multiplyen, loke who so lust to knowe;
So large, so gode, and se comodyouse,
That to declare is straunge and merveylouse.
Ffor of sylvere and golde there is the oore
Amonge the wylde Yrishe, though they be pore;
Ffor they ar rude, and can thereone no skylle;
So that if we had there pese and gode wylle,
To myne and fyne, and metalle for to pure,
In wylde Yrishe myght we fynde the cure.
As in Londone seyth a juellere,
Whych brought from thens gold oore to us here,
Whereof was fyned metalle gode and clene,
As the touche, no bettere coude be sene. . . . .
Ye remembere, wyth alle youre myghte take hede
To kepe Yrelond, that it be not loste;
Ffor it is a boterasse and a poste
Undre England, and Wales another.
God forbede but eche were othere brothere,
Of one ligeaunce dewe unto the kynge.
But I have pité, in gode feythe, of thys thynge,
That I shalle saye, wythe avysemente,
I ham aferde that Yrelonde wol be shente;
It muste awey, it wolle be loste frome us.'
Wyse mene seyne, whyche folyn not ne dotyn,
That wylde Yrishe so muche of grounde have gotyne
There upon us, as lykelynesse may be,
Lyke as England to sherish two or thre
Of thys oure londe is made comparable,
So wylde Yrishe have wonne unto us unable

Yit to defende, and of no powere
That oure grounde there is a lytelle cornere
To alle Yrelonde in trewe comparisone.
It nedeth no more this mater to expone,
Which if it be loste, as Criste Jhesu forbede,
Ffarewelle Wales, than Englond cometh to drede.

After this, the poet deplores the fact that 'the wild Irish' have recently reclaimed from the English as much ground as perhaps, two or three English shires ('sherish'), which is rather vague, were it not that he goes on to say that our possessions in Ireland amount to but 'a little corner.' If Ireland goes, he proceeds to add, then 'farewell Wales!' and then—I suppose the deluge. We have then some praise of Ireland as a land plenteous and rich in the extreme: —

'And welle I wote that frome hens to Rome,
And, as men sey, in alle Cristendome,
Ys no grounde ne lond to Yreland lyche,
So large, so gode, so plenteouse, so riche.'

Lastly,—till he takes you to Iceland,—the poet warns England against possible rebellion in Wales. The conclusion of the poem is well worth quoting, almost entire, not only on account of some really striking lines which it contains, but on account of the excessively quaint applications which are made in it of New Testament phraseology: —

'Now than for love of Cryste and of his joye,
Brynge yit Englande out of trouble and noye;

Take herte and witte, and set a governaunce,
Set many wittes wythoutene variaunce
To one accorde and unanimité,
Put to gode wylle for to kepe the see.
Ffurste for worshypp and profite also,
And to rebuke of eche evyl wylled foo; . . . .
But many landes wolde seche here pease for nede,
The see welle kepte, it muste be do for drede.
Thus muste Flaundres for nede have unité
And pease wyth us, it wolle none other bee, . . .
This unité is to God plesaunce
And pease after the werres variaunce;
The ende of bataile is pease sikerlye,
And power causeth pease finally.
Kepte than the see abought in specialle,
Whiche of England is the rounde walle;
As thoughe England were lykened to a cité,
And the walle enviroun were the see.
Kepe than the see, that is the walle of Englond,
And than is Englond kepte by Goddes sonde; [*sond, word*]
That is, for ony thinge that is wythoute,
Englande were at ease wythoutene doute.
And thus shulde everi lande one with another
Entrecomon as brother wyth his brother,
And life togedre werreles [*war-less*] in unité,
Wythoute rancoure, in verry charité,
In reste and pese, to Cristis grete plesaunce,
Wythoute striffe, debate, and variaunce.
Whiche pease men shulde enserche with besinesse,
And knytt it sadely holdyng in holynesse.
The apostil seyth, if ye liste to see,
" Be ye busy for to kepe unité
Of the spirite in the bonde of pease,"
Which is nedefulle to alle, wythouten lesse.

The profete bideth us pease fore to enquere,
To pursue it, this is holy desire.
Oure Lorde Jhesu seith, "Blessed mot they be
That maken pease, that is tranquillité."
"Ffor pease makers," as Mathew writeth aryght,
"Shull be called the sonnes of God allemight."
God yeve us grace the weyes for to keye
Of his preceptis, and slugly not to slepe
In shame of synne, that oure verry foo
Mow be to us convers and torned too.'

I am sure it is not necessary to call the attention of the attentive reader to the evident *bonhomie* of all this. The poet's rude, undoubting faith in the right of conquest is very instructive. You have won Calais from the French. However much they dislike your having one foot in their territory, I advise you, for Christ's sake, to stay there, and use the advantages which the possession gives you, for your own aggrandisement, and for the sake of holding the whip over other nations. Power is the means of successful war; the end of war is peace; and in the Gospel, the Lord Christ blessed the peacemakers, and when He ascended into heaven (I have omitted these lines) He bequeathed His peace to His disciples. If this does not betray a truly British consciousness of a national mission, there is no force in language.

To point the moral would be trite. We have not only left Calais to the French, we have taken the title king of France off the half-penny; these acts of self-

abnegation have not yet ruined us; and an English poet of four centuries later than the 'Libel of English Policy,' can yet echo some of its last words: —

> . . . . . 'Far beyond,
> Imagined more than seen, the skirts of France,
> God bless the narrow sea which keeps her off,
> And keeps our Britain whole within herself!"

For though these words are put into the mouth of the 'Tory member's eldest son' at the close of the 'Princess,' they are instinct with a feeling which Mr. Tennyson over and over again discloses in the course of his writings.

I must not quit this very curious relic of the 'good old English' spirit, without noting two more points of interest.

First. It is amusing to note the character which the poem gives to the Flemings of the day: —

> 'Fflemmyngis *wyth here gyle,*
> *Ffor chaungeable they are in lytell whyle.*'

One version reading, 'Ffor thei nevere come trewe eny whyle.' And, to this day, among mercantile men, 'a very Flemish affair' is a common phrase for a bad, a 'dark,' or unremunerative bargain. Yet the importance of the commerce with Flanders is frankly admitted: —

> 'For Flaundres is staple, as men tell me,
> To alle nacyons of Crystiante.'

Secondly. We have in this 'Libel' a striking reference to Sir Richard Whittington, mercer, 'thrice Lord Mayor of London,' the first time being just before the close of the fourteenth century. He is called the very sun of commerce, its loadstone, and chief flower: —

> 'And in worship nowe thinke I on the sonne
> Of marchaundy, Richarde of Whitingdone,
> That loode-sterre and chefe chosen floure,
> Whate hathe by hym oure England of honoure?
> And whate profite hathe bene of his richesse?
> And yet lasteth dayly in worthinesse,
> That penne and papere may not suffice
> Him to describe, so high he was of prise;
> Above marchaundis to sette him one of the beste,
> I can no more, but God have hym in reste.'

Before we go, and while we are in the company of Lord Mayors, we may just pick up an incident or two from Stowe, not foreign to the topics of the 'Libel,' and belonging to the century of Chaucer. In 1377, says Stowe, 'John Philpot, a citizen of London, sent ships to the sea, and scoured it of pirates, taking many of them prisoners,'—a suggestion of the state of the liquid highway at the time, and still more a suggestion of the responsibilities, belligerent and other, which individuals took upon themselves. In 1385, John Churchman, sheriff, new built the Custom House. In 1386, 'the citizens, *fearing the French*, pulled down houses near about their city, repaired their walls

and cleansed their ditches.' The ditches, again! Lastly, in 1390, Adam Bamme, goldsmith, and mayor, provided *from beyond the seas* corn in great abundance, so that the city was able to serve the country!

IV. And now, under shelter of the ships which head the chapter, we will pass from the commerce of the time to the travel of the time. Fortunately for the interest of the page, Sir John Maundeville, or Mandeville, the very type and 'moral' of the mediæval traveller, was the contemporary of Chaucer. The chief purpose for which I quote him here is the entertainment of the reader; the secondary one, that of illustrating once more a very old text. I cannot help thinking that Sir John Mandeville, for all his enterprise and culture, must have been rather a stupid man. If any mediævalist thinks this irreverent, let me hasten to explain that I mean stupid chiefly in the sense of being easily muddled. That he believed—as men counted of belief in the middle ages—in the truth of all he wrote, I do not know that I doubt. Yet here and there I have had a passing fancy that he was joking, or testing the credulity of mankind. And there is a passage in Chapter XXVII. 'Of the Ryalle Estate of Prestre John,' which rather staggers me, though a sharper wit than mine may readily find an explanation. He says:—

'In that Desert ben many wylde men, that ben hidouse to loken on: for thei ben horned; and thei speken nought,

but thei gronten, as pygges. And there is also gret plentee of wylde houndes. And there ben manye popegayes, that thei clepen psitakes in hire langage: and thei speken of hire propre nature, and salven men that gon thorghe the desertes, and speken to hem als appertely, as thoughe it were a man. And thei that speken wel, han a large tonge, and han 5 toos upon a fote. And there ben also of other manere, that han but 3 toos upon a fote; and thei speken not, or but litille; for thei cone not but cryen.'

Now, granting the parrots that give the time of day (salven=salute) to the passing traveller, how came the natives to call a parrot *psittacus?* The fact is, the good man's head was such a hash of Bible, apocryphal gospel, Pliny's natural history, and the marvellous science of the day, and he got so excited over his task, that there is nothing uncharitable in supposing that he sometimes scarcely knew when he was adding a perfume to the violet, and when he was not. How comes it that in the Latin version, these men who are here 'horned,' are not 'horned?' I strongly suspect that a careful comparison of the Latin, French, and English versions of the author, would confirm the idea that he was often very much self-befogged as to what he had seen and what he had not seen, and not free from the traditional tendency of travellers. That the eye sees only what it brings with it is true or false, according as it is read. But that what it brings with it the eye does see is true,—as true of travellers, as of psychologists, moralists, and critics of human life.

A man who can conceive nothing higher than commonplace virtues will note nothing higher in history, biography, or contemporary life; he goes forth expecting to see cads, and cads he will see. Just in the same way, a traveller who goes forth expecting to see dragons, gryphons, giants, and miracles, will be likely to come back saying that he has seen, at all events, something like them. He may feel a little disappointed, as people do at first sight of Staffa and Iona, or the Pyramids, or St. Peter's; but he will probably feel bound to lash himself to a point that shall not fall disgracefully short of what he himself expects to see and what he thinks others expect of him. Ardent mediævalists must not imagine that I have the smallest desire to make game of the 'simple faith' of the time, —but even *for* his time I fancy Mandeville writes with excessive pious unction; and of that I have a profound suspicion. Readers who do not catch the odour of the 'unction' will, of course, think me a very profane fellow.

The most interesting excerpt which I shall venture to lay before the reader is from Chapter XXVIII. 'Of the Develes Hede in the Valeye perilous,' the reader being so good as to remember that Mandeville is here skirting the land of Prestre John: —

'Besyde that Yle of Mistorak, upon the left syde, nyghe to the ryvere of Phison, is a marveylous thing. There is a vale betwene the mountaynes, that durethe nyghe a 4 myle: and summen clepen it the Vale enchaunted; some clepen it

the Vale of Develes, and some clepen it the Vale perilous. In that vale, heren men often tyme grete tempestes and thondres and grete murmures and noyses, alle dayes and nyghtes: and gret noyse, as it were sown of tabours and of nakeres and trompes, as thoughe it were of a gret feste. This vale is alle fulle of develes, and hathe ben alle weys. And men seyn there, that it is on of the entrees of helle. In that vale is gret plentee of gold and sylver: wherefore many mys belevynge men, and manye Cristene men also, gon in often tyme, for to have of the thresoure, that there is: but fewe comen agen; and namely of the mys belevynge men, ne of the Cristene men nouther: for thei ben anon strangled of develes. And in mydde place of that vale, undir a roche, is an hed and the visage of a devyl bodyliche, fulle horrible and dreadfulle to see, and it schewethe not but the hed, to the schuldres. But there is no man in the world so hardy, Cristene men ne other, but that he wolde ben a drad for to beholde it; and that it wolde semen him to dye for drede; so is it hidouse for to beholde. For he beholdethe every man so scharply, with dreadfulle eyen, that ben evere more mevynge and sparklynge, as fuyr, and chaungethe and sterethe so often in dyverse manere, with so horrible countenance, that no man dar not neighen towardes him. And fro him comethe out smoke and stynk and fuyr, and so moche abhomynacioun, that unethe no man may there endure. But the gode Crestene men, that ben stable in the feythe, entren welle withouten perile. For thei wil first schryven hem, and marken hem with the tokene of the Holy Cros; so that the fendes ne han no power over hem. But alle be it that thei ben with outen perile, zit natheles ne ben thei not with outen drede, whan that thei seen the develes visibely and bodyly alle aboute hem, that maken fulle many dyverse assautes and manaces in eyr and in erthe, and agasten hem with strokes of thondre blastes and of tempestes. And

the moste drede is, that God wole taken vengeance thanne, of that men han mys don agen his wille. And yee schulle undirstonde, that whan my fellows and I weren in that vale, wee weren in gret thought, whether that wee dursten putten oure bodyes in aventure, to gon in or non, in the proteccioun of God. And some of oure fellowes accordeden to enter, and somme noght. So there weren with us 2 worthi men, Frere Menoures, that weren of Lombardye, that seyden, that zif ony man wolde entren, thei wolde gon in with us. And when thei hadden seyd so, upon the gracyous trust of God and of hem, wee leet synge Masse, and made every man to ben schryven and houseld: and thanne wee entreden 14 personnes; but at oure goynge out, wee weren but 9. And so wee wisten nevere, whether that oure fellowes weren lost, or elle turned agen for drede: but wee ne saughe hem never after: and tho weren 2 men of Grece and 3 of Spayne. And oure other fellows, that wolden not gon in with us, thei wenten by another coste, to ben before us, and so thei were. And thus wee passeden that perilouse Vale, and founden thereinne gold and sylver and precious stones and riche jewelles gret plentee, both here and there, as us semed: but whether that it was, as us semede, I wot nere: for I touched none, because that the Develes ben so subtyle to make a thing to seme otherwise than it is, for to disceyve mankynde: and therfore I towched none; and also because that I wolde not ben put out of my devocioun: for I was more devout thanne, than evere I was before or after, and alle for the drede of fendes, that I saughe in dyverse figures; and also for the gret multytude of dede bodyes, that I saughe there liggynge be the weye, be alle the Vale, as thoughe there had ben a bataylle betwene 2 kynges and the myghtyest of the contree, and that the gretter partye had ben discomfyted and slayn. And I trowe, that unethe scholde ony contree have so mochе peple with in him, as lay slayn in that Vale, as us thoughte;

the whiche was an hidouse sight to seen. And I merveylled moche, that there weren so manye, and the bodyes all hole, with outen rotynge. But I trowe, that fendes made hem semen to ben so hole, with outen rotynge. But that myghte not ben to myn avys, that so manye scholde have entred so newely, ne so manye newely slayn, with outen stynkynge and rotynge. And manye of hem weren in habite of Cristene men: but I trowe wel, that it weren of suche, that wenten in for covetyse of the thresoure, that was there, and hadden over moche feblenesse in feithe; so that hire hertes ne myghte not enduren in the beleve for drede. And therfore weren wee the more devout a gret del: and yit wee weren cast doun and beten doun many tymes to the hard erthe, be wyndes and thondres and tempestes: but evere more God of his grace halp us: and so wee passed that perilous Vale, with outen perile and with outen encombrance. Thanked be alle myghty Godd.'

This is circumstantial enough in all conscience, only one would like to cross-examine, separately, the nine saved out of the fourteen travellers, concerning the five who are said to have never come out of the valley, '2 men of Grece and 3 of Spayne' (cries of, Name!) And there are several touches that provoke a smile. Conceive these fourteen fellows having the mass sung, and being shrived and houselled before they went into the 'Valeye' under the ineffable protection of the two Lombardian Minorites. This is, indeed (what I have already said, mediæval matters so often are not, though they are said to be so) childlike. 'I was more devout then than ever I was before or after, and all for the dread of fiends,' is truly exquisite.

After the statement that the number of the dead bodies — some of them quite recent, and none of them rotting, which Mandeville frankly confesses was not quite to his 'avys,' we are not surprised when, having escaped from the valley, we find him immediately alighting upon a 'gret yle' where the folk are giants of 28 feet, *or* 30 feet long — note the circumstantiality of the man. Nor after that are we astonished to hear that '*men said*' there was yet another yle not far off, in which there were giants of 40 or 50 feet, or, 'as some men say,' of 50 cubits long. Mandeville carefully declines to make himself responsible for these high figures, and yet he artfully assigns for not going himself to test their accuracy a reason which leaves the reader under the impression that he believed them only too implicitly :—

'But I saghe none of tho; for I hadde no lust to go to tho parties, because that no man comethe nouther in to that Yle ne in to the other, but gif he be devoured anon.'

Still, my object is not to poke fun at the old knight, but to call attention to that very curious passage of the Valley Perilous. Did not Macaulay affirm that Bunyan had read nothing but Sir Bevis, or something of that kind? Yet I venture to guess that he had read Sir John Mandeville, and that this Perilous Valley was in his mind, unconsciously I dare say, when he wrote certain well-known portions of the Pilgrim's Progress.*

* Of course I refer to the descriptions of the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

However this, though interesting, is not very important, and we will choose another passage or two from the first great English traveller, *ex professo*. Yet, before passing on, let him have the full benefit of his own apology for——mistakes.

'But Lordes and Knyghtes and other noble and worthi men, that conne Latyn but litylle, and han ben bezonde the see, knowen and undirstonden, gif I erre in devisynge, for forgetynge, or elles; that thei mowe redresse it and amende it. For thinges passed out of longe tyme from a mannes mynde or from his syght, turnen sone into forgetynge: because that mynde of man ne may not ben comprehended ne witheholden, for the freeltee of mankynde.'

The book of 'Voiage and Travaile' opens with an invocation, 'In the Name of God, glorious and Allemyghty!' and a full third of it is occupied with what the knight fancied he saw in the Holy Land. We have no account of the mere incidents of the journey overland, but as soon as ever we have got to Constantinople (which is reached *per saltum*), we are introduced to the actual cross of Calvary, the coat without seam, the sponge, and the reed of the crucifixion. Passing over a thousand wonders, we come to Mount Ararat:—

'And there besyde is another hille, that men clepen Ararathe: but the Jewes clepen it Taneez; where Noes schipp rested, and yit is upon that montayne: and men may seen it a ferr, in cleer wedre: and that montayne is wel a 7 myle highe. And sum men seyn, that thei han seen and touched the schipp; and pute here fyngres in the parties,

where the feend went out, whan that Noe seyde, *Benedicite.* But thei that seyn suche wordes, seyn here wille: for a man may not gon up the montayne, for gret plentee of snow, that is alle weyes on that montayne, nouther somer ne wynter: so that no man may gon up there; ne nevere man dide, sithe the tyme of Noe; saf a monk, that, be the grace of God, broughte on of the plankes doun; that yit is in the mynstre, at the foot of the montayne.'

I hope that exception in favour of the monk that brought one of the planks of the ark down—by the grace of God, how else?—will make the reader laugh as many times as it has done me. In Ethiopia are diamonds—of both sexes—that marry and have children. Mandeville has himself '*often tymes* assayed it,' and found that diamonds will grow year by year if you wet them with May dew:—

'And ther ben sūme of the gretnesse of a bene, and sūme als grete as an haselle note. And thei ben square and poynted of here owne kynde, bothe aboven and benethen, with outen worchinge of mannes hond. And thei growen to gedre, male and femele. And thei ben norysscīt with the dew of Hevene. And thei engendren comounly, and bryngen forthe smale children, that multiplyen and growen alle the yeer. I have often tymes assayed, that gif a man kepe hem with a litylle of the roche, and wete hem with May dew ofte sithes, thei schulle growe everyche yeer; and the smale wole waxen grete.'

On the roundness of the earth, Mandeville is more than sensible, and a small portion of his argument will, I think, please the reader:—

'And therfore hathe it befallen many tymes of o thing, that I have herd cownted, whan I was yong; how a worthi man departed sómtyme from oure contrees, for to go serche the world. And so he passed Ynde, and the yles beyonde Ynde, where ben mo than 5000 yles: and so longe he wente be see and lond, and so enviround the world be many seysons, that he fond an yle, where he herde speke his owne langage, callynge on oxen in the plowghe, suche wordes as men speken to bestes in his owne contree: whereof he hadde gret mervayle: for he knewe not how it myghte be. But I seye, that he had gon so longe, be londe and be see, that he had envyround all the erthe, that he was comen agen envirounynge; that is to seye, goynge aboute, unto his owne marches, gif he wolde have passed forthe, til he had founden his contree and his owne knouleche. But he turned agen from thens, from whens he was come fro; and so he loste moche peynefulle labour, as him self seyde, a gret while aftre, that he was comen hom. For it befelle aftre, that he wente in to Norweye; and there tempest of the see toke him; and he arryved in an yle; and whan he was in that yle, he knew wel, that it was the yle, where he had herd speke his owne langage before, and the callynge of the oxen at the plowghe: and that was possible thinge.'

This is a very good story, which is familiar in more than one shape, and that touch of the men calling the oxen is very pretty. Mandeville's account of 'Paradys' is also worth quoting; there is much unconscious humour in his candid statement that he had not been there, and should therefore return to what he *had* seen; and there is poetry in the whole description, which, however, I abbreviate a little:—

'Of Paradys ne can not I speken propurly: for I was not there. It is fer beyonde; and that forthinkethe me: and also I was not worthi. But as I have herd seye of wyse men beyonde, I schalle telle you with gode wille. Paradys terrestre, as wise men seyn, is the highest place of erthe, that is in alle the world: and it is so highe, that it touchethe nyghe to the cercle of the Mone, there as the Mone makethe hire torn. For sche is so highe, that the flode of Noe ne myght not come to hire, that wolde have covered alle the erthe of the world alle aboute, and aboven and benethen, saf Paradys only allone. And this Paradys is enclosed alle aboute with a walle; and men wyte not wherof it is. For the walles ben covered alle over with mosse; as it semethe. And it semethe not that the walle is ston of nature. And that walle strecchethe fro the Southe to the Northe; and it hathe not but on entree, that is closed with fyre brennynge; so that no man, that is mortalle, ne dar not entren. And in the moste highe place of Pardys, evene in the myddel place, is a welle, that castethe out the 4 flodes, that rennen be dyverse londes. . . . . And yee schulle undirstonde, that no man that is mortelle, ne may not approchen to that Paradys. For be Londe no man may go for wylde bestes, that ben in the desertes, and for the highe mountaynes and gret huge roches, that no man may passe by, for the derke places that ben there, and that manye: and be the ryveres may no man go; for the water rennethe so rudely and so scharply, because that it comethe doun so outrageously from the highe places aboven, that it rennethe in so grete wawes, that no schipp may not rowe ne seyle agenes it: and the watre rorethe so, and makethe so huge noyse, and so gret tempest, that no man may here other in the Schipp, thoughe he cryede with alle the craft that he cowde, in the hyeste voys that he myghte. Many grete lordes han assayed with gret wille many tymes for to passen be tho ryveres toward Paradys, with fulle grete

companyes: but thei myghte not speden in hire viage; and manye dyeden for werynesse of rowynge agenst tho stronge wawes; and many of hem becamen blynde, and many deve, for the noyse of the water: and sūme weren perisscht and loste, with inne the wawes: so that no mortelle man may approche to that place, with outen specyalle grace of God: so that of that place I can seye you no more. And therfore I schalle holde me stille, and retornen to that that I have seen.'

It requires considerable allowance for the manner in which the memories or imaginations of travellers jumble up discordant things,—in fact, it requires the whole stress of Mandevile's apology to 'gret Lordes' and others, to enable a modern reader to recognise anything real under the following disguise:—

'From that lond, in returnynge be 10 jorneys thorge out the lond of the grete chane, is another gode yle, and a gret Kyngdom, where the kyng is fulle riche and myghty. And amonges the riche men of his contree, is a passynge riche man, that is no prynce, ne duke ne erl; but he hathe mo that holden of him londes and other lordschipes: for he is more riche. For he hathe every yeer of annuelle rente 300000 hors charged with corn of dyverse greynes and of ryzs: and so he ledethe a fulle noble lif, and a delycate, aftre the custom of the contree. For he hathe every day, 50 fair damyseles, alle maydenes, that serven him everemore at his mete, and . . . . . and for to do with hem that is to his plesance. And whan he is at the table, thei bryngen him hys mete at every tyme, 5 and 5 to gedre. And in bryngynge hire servyse, thei syngen a song. And aftre that, thei kutten his mete, and putten it in his mouthe: for he touchethe no thing ne handlethe nought,

but holdethe evere more his hondes before him, upon the table. For he hathe so longe nayles, that he may take no thing, ne handle no thing.' For the noblesse of that contree is to have longe nayles, and to make hem growen alle weys to ben as longe as men may. And there ben manye in that contree, that han hire nayles so longe, that thei envyronne all the hond: and that is a gret noblesse. And the noblesse of the wōmen, is for to haven smale feet and litille: and therfore anon as thei ben born, they leet bynde hire feet so streyte, that thei may not growen half as nature wolde: And alle weys theise damyseles, that I spak of beforn, syngen alle the tyme that this riche man etethe: and whan that he etethe no more of his firste cours, thanne other 5 and 5 of faire damyseles bryngen him his seconde cours, alle weys syngynge, as thei dide beforn. And so thei don contynuelly every day, to the ende of his mete. And in this manere he he ledethe his lif. And so dide thei before him, that weren his auncestres; and so schulle thei that comen aftre him, with outen doynge of ony dedes of armes: but lyven evere more thus in ese, as a swyn, that is fedde in sty, for to ben made fatte. He hathe a fulle fair palays and fulle riche, where that he dwellethe inne: of the whiche, the walles ben in cyrcuyt 2 myle: and he hathe with inne many faire gardynes, and many faire halles and chambres, and the pawment of his halles and chambres ben of gold and sylver. And in the myd place of on of hys gardynes, is a lytylle mountayne, where there is a litylle medewe: and in that medewe, is a lytylle toothille with tours and pynacles, alle of gold: and in that litylle toothille wole he sytten often tyme, for to taken the ayr and to desporten hym: for that place is made for no thing elles, but only for his desport.'

The child-like formula adopted at the close is very noticeable, being, as it is, as old as Aryan legend itself,

and quite at home in our own nurseries. You may hear poor, dirty little girls reciting it to each other in street-corners, where they have gathered in groups to have games and tell stories:—'In that sea there is an island; in that island there is a garden; in that garden there is a tree; in that tree there is a nest; in that nest there is an egg'—and so forth.

I will not trouble the reader with the 'men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders;' the androgynes; the men with only one leg and foot, which latter is so large that it is used as an umbrella for siesta; the fountains or rivers that change colour four times a-day, or give out various perfumes—every dream of the ancient or mediæval imagination concerning unknown or little-known regions finding its fit place in the traveller's story, and being told as coolly as a modern newspaper tells of a rise in grey shirtings. But I will do Mandeville the justice of quoting some of his very quaint and rather boasting last words, especially as they fix the date at which he flourished, and exhibit him in the decline of life troubled with arthritic pains: —

'And I John Maundevylle Knyghte aboveseyd (alle thoughe I bē unworthi), that departed from oure contrees and passed the see, the yeer of grace 1322, that have passed many londes and many yles and contrees, and cerched manye fulle straunge places, and have ben in many a fulle gode honourable companye, and at many a faire dede of armes (alle be it that I dide none my self, for myn unable insuffisance), now I am comen hom (mawgree my self) to reste:

for gowtes, artetykes, that me distreynem, tho diffynen the ende of my labour, agenst my wille (God knowethe). And thus takynge solace in my wrecched reste, recordynge the tyme passed, I have fulfilled theise thinges and putte hem wryten in this boke, as it wolde come in to my mynde, the yeer of grace in 1356 in the 34 yeer that I departede from oure contrees. Wherfore I preye to alle the rederes and hereres of this boke, gif it plese hem, that thei wolde preyen to God for me: and I schalle preye for hem. And alle tho that seyn for me a *Pater noster*, with an *Ave Maria*, that God forgeve me my synnes, I make hem parteneres and graunte hem part of alle the gode pilgrymages and of alle the gode dedes, that I have don, gif ony be to his plesance: and noghte only of tho, but of alle that evere I schalle do unto my lyfes ende.'

This partnership in good works is exquisite. And not less so, but rather more, Mandeville's truly mediæval notion of what proof is:

'And yee schulle undirstonde, gif it lyke you, that at myn hom comynge, I cam to Rome, and schewed my lif to oure holy Fadir the Pope, and was assoylled of alle that lay in my conscience, of many a dyverse grevous poynt: as men mosten nedes, that ben in company, dwellyng amonges so many a dyverse folk of dyverse secte and of beleeve, as I have ben. And amonges alle, I schewed hym this tretys, that I had made aftre informacioun of men, that knewen of thinges, that I had not seen myself; and also of marveyles and customes, that I hadde seen my self; as fer as God wolde geve me grace: and besoughte his holy Fadirhode, that my Boke myghten be examyned and corrected be avys of his wyse and discreet conseille. And oure holy Fadir, of his special grace, remytted my Boke to ben examyned and preved be the avys of his seyd conseille. Be the whiche, my

boke was preeved for trewe; in so moche that thei schewed me a boke, that my boke was examynde by, that comprehended fulle moch more, be an hundred part; be the whiche, the *Mappa Mundi* was made after. And so my boke (alle be it that many men ne list not to geve credence to no thing, but to that that thei seen with hire eye, ne be the auctour ne the persone never so trewe) is affermed and preved be oure holy fadir, in maner and forme as I have seyd.'

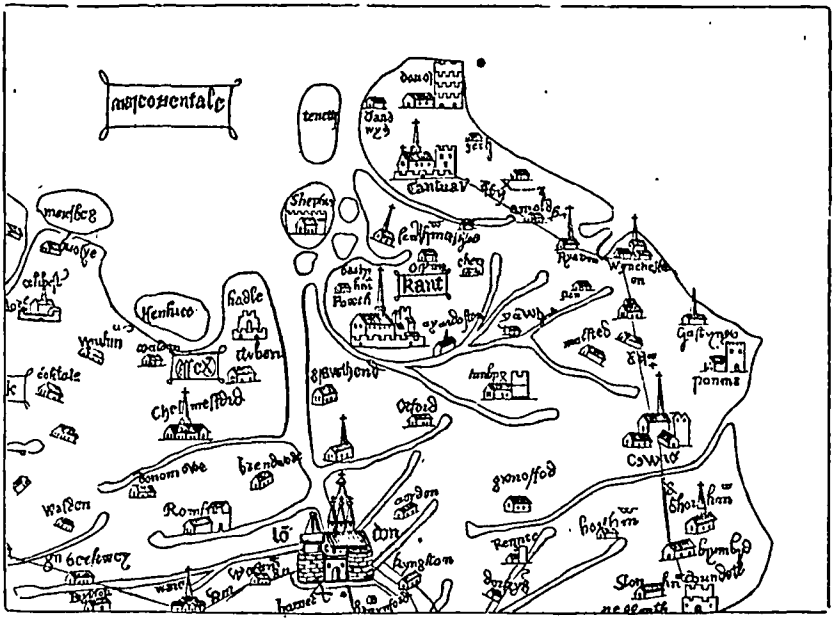
There is something intensely amusing in the way in which the good man indirectly lays the blame of his 'dyverse grevous poynts' of wrong-doing on the company he had kept,—'men mosten nedes, that ben in company, dwellyng amonges so many a dyverse folk of dyverse secte and of beleeve as I have ben.' He forgets that he went into bad company of his own accord.

Lastly, I may note that Mandeville was a reactionist; and that, whatever bad company he got into when he was abroad, he professed himself extremely shocked with the depravation of manners and of faith which he found in his native country on his return home:—

'Being arrived again in England, and having seene the wickednes of that age, he gave out this speech: "In our time (said he), it may be spoken more truly then of olde, that Vertue is gone, the Church is under foote, the Clergie is in errour, the Devill raigneth, and Simonie beareth the sway."'

The summary was bad enough, but there is a little reason to suppose that it was Wickliffism which did most to administer this shock to the mind of the

gentleman who had so lately been at home with the Paynim. I need not recall what has been said in another chapter about the solemn credulity (a noun I do not like however) of the middle ages, its Christianity of wonder and legend, and its gropings among the dark places of the earth. But Sir John Mandeville typifies all this so strongly, and presents such a curious contrast to the half-sceptical humour which characterises Chaucer's treatment of themes cognate to some of his own, that I have devoted a large space to this interesting old traveller. Contrast his simple faith in the plank out of the ark which a monk brought down (by the grace of God) with the ridicule of the fairies which Chaucer has put into the mouth of the Wife of Bath, and the good-humoured scorn which he allows to overflow the verse when the Pardoner's relics are in question!



CHAPTER XVIII.

THIS PLACE AND THAT.

MEN may come and men may go, says the Brook in the Laureate's verse, but I go on for ever. Generation after generation is born, and dies, but the Earth remaineth. In the proem to 'Romola,' one of the greatest of living writers has restated a thought which has never, from the time when men first tried to record their thoughts in anything like a literature, been absent from the human mind. "More than three

centuries and a half ago, in mid spring time in 1492, we are sure that the angel of the dawn as he travelled with broad, slow wing from the Levant to the Pillars of Hercules, and from the summits of the Caucasus across all the snowy Alpine ridges to the dark nakedness of the Western isles, saw nearly the same outline of firm land and unstable sea—saw the same great mountain shadows on the same valleys as he had seen to-day—saw olive mounts, and pine forests, and the broad plains, green with young corn or rain-freshened grass—saw the domes and spires of cities rising by the river sides or mingled with the sedge-like masts on the many curved sea-coasts, in the same spots where they rise to-day. The great river-courses which have shaped the lives of men have hardly changed; and those other streams, the life-currents that ebb and flow in human hearts, pulsate to the same great needs, the same great loves and terrors. As our thoughts follow close in the slow wake of the dawn, we are impressed with the broad sameness of the human lot, which never alters in the main headings of its history, hunger and labour, seed-time and harvest, love and death.'

Let us take to heart this thought, of the essential sameness of the surface of the earth, and, in approaching the close of a book which suggests so much of change, and, indeed, deals chiefly with the era in which were disclosed the beginnings of the most modern of changes, dwell for a short space upon some thoughts suggested by the map, four hundred years old, of which

a section is copied at the head of this chapter. And let us, at once, turn to the Tabard Inn, which, however altered and perverted, still stands, within a few steps of the ancient and most venerable building in which Chaucer's master and friend Gower has his tomb—a memorial well worth visiting.

I. Very early in the fourteenth century the Abbot of Hyde, near Winchester, bought land in Southwark, not far south of London Bridge, and built upon the site a house of entertainment for the abbots who came to London. Stowe says, 'that 'within the Tabbard Inn was the lodging of the 'Abbot of Hyde (by the city of Winchester), a fair house for him and his train when he came to that city to Parliament.' At all events, Chaucer's 'Tabbard' stood upon the site of the hostelry built by the Abbot of Hyde; and it is natural enough to suppose that, the house having originally been built by the Abbot for ecclesiastical convenience, its scope and uses were extended by degrees to the accommodation of secular people. Pilgrims to Canterbury would naturally enough resort to the Abbot's house in search of hospitality, or quasi-hospitality, and so in time the Tabard would become an open hotel, willing, like other hotels, to take in anybody, but with special attractions to religious pilgrims. Dwellers in cities in which one street is chiefly distinguished from another in the same labyrinth by its name, do not readily realize the import-

ance in mediæval times of having a hostelry just in the main line of a road to an important place; but the fact is, the Tabard was most favourably placed, at that point of the Pilgrims' Way which would catch the greatest number of travellers to Canterbury. There seem to be only two ways for accounting for the fact that Chaucer introduced the Tabard so prominently in his great poem. One is, that it really was the chief hostelry in Southwark, or at least the pilgrims' hostelry *par eminence*. The other supposition is the very unpoetical one, that Chaucer owed the landlord, Harry Baily, a score for entertainment; but then those were not the days of printing and advertising! If there is a third supposition, it must be that Chaucer introduced the Tabard and Harry Baily from an impulse of good fellowship—from use and wont—since neither serves the rhyme. But there is no need of a third supposition. It is really more than plausible that the Tabard was, in a special sense, the Pilgrims' Inn.

Stowe, having just been speaking of the Marshalsea, writes thus: — 'From thence, towards London Bridge, on the same side, be many fair inns for receipt of travellers. By these signs, the Spurr, Christopher, Bull, Queenes Head, Tabarde, George, Hart, Kinges Head, and others. Amongst the which the most ancient is the Tabard, so called of the sign, which, as we now term it, is of a jacket, or sleeveless coat, whole before, open on both sides, with a square collar, winged

at the shoulders: a stately garment of old time, commonly worn of noblemen and others, both at home and abroad in the wars; but then (to wit, in the wars) their arms embroidered, or otherwise depict, upon them, that every man by his coat of arms might be known from others. But now these tabards are only worn by the heralds, and be called their coats of arms in service.' Stowe published his first edition in 1598; and Speght, in his Chaucer, published in 1602, says of the old inn:—'Whereas through time it hath been much decayed, it is now, by Master J. Preston, with the abbot's house thereto adjoined, newly repaired, and with convenient rooms much increased for the receipt of many guests.' Up to this point we may suppose the inn to have presented substantially the same appearance as it did in the old Pilgrim days; but in 1676 it suffered in the great fire which then took place in Southwark; and when it was rebuilt, 'Credulous Aubrey,' who states that the inn of Chaucer's time, which existed before the fire, was a timber house, adds that after the fire, 'the ignorant landlord, or tenant, instead of the ancient sign of the Tabard, put up the Talbot, or dog.' I think we can understand how this may have happened. When the inn has been rebuilt, it finds a new landlord. He asks some one what the sign had been. The man replies, with a broad, coarse pronunciation, 'The Taubud.' Upon which the landlord goes and puts up 'The Talbot,' which he probably pronounced much in the same way.

Everybody, who is old enough to remember the old mails and stage-coaches, has, probably, prominent among his recollections of inn names in the Borough, the Talbot and the St. Catharine Wheel; but certainly the Talbot, which is now used for a booking-office for the Midland Railway, retained its character as a favourite hostelry for visitors, approaching London on that side, down to the days of Hogarth, or later. It will be observed, in the drawing of the Tabard, which is copied from Urry's Chaucer, published in 1721, with a dedication to Queen Anne, that the inn-yard lies open to the thoroughfare, the sign hanging from a beam, stretched across the street, upon two posts. Mr. Saunders believes, or believed, that he had made out at the Tabard the remains of the very room in which the pilgrims would have met, if they met at all; but he, like his venerable editor, Mr. Charles Knight, appears to me (who speak, however, with diffidence) to lean too much to the emotional side of antiquarian questions. I think this a safer error (if any error were ever safe) than the opposite one of leaning too much to what may called the scientific or sceptical side of antiquarian topics, because I believe, as I have said in another page, that tradition, when congruous, is infinitely more to be relied upon with regard to simple matters of fact (though not on moral or metaphysical points, like the character of a man, or the construction of a series of events,) than the sceptical school

of historians would have us believe. If Mr. Charles Knight and Sir George Cornewall Lewis had each written a history of England, each giving his own bent full swing, I should expect Mr. Knight's to contain the greater number of small errors; but I should also expect Sir George Cornewall Lewis to winnow his facts through so wide a sieve that the true would be bolted out with the false, or, to vary the figure, that he would grind his facts to impalpable powder in the mill of minute criticism.

That the front or any portion of the now existing Tabard Inn is substantially what existed in Chaucer's time, is decidedly difficult to believe. But at all events, this sufficiently ancient inn,—as the St. Catherine Wheel is, or recently was,—may be taken as an illustration of the manner in which public hostelries were formerly built; a courtyard open to the main thoroughfare, with wooden galleries, running round the buildings, approached by steps from the courtyard. Into these courtyards would pour the travellers from time to time, and not less the jugglers, the ballad-singers, the mummers, the street clowns, and the morris-dancers; while the guests staying at the hostelry would come out upon the balconies to the sound of the tabor, timbrel, dulcimer, or bagpipe, and would throw—or a good many of them *not* throw—the expected *pour-boire* to the performers. Just across London Bridge on the south, ran in those days a great street with gabled houses, much overlapping

the road, and, as seen in the distance, nodding to each other. This was the ancient High Street of Southwark, older than the Conquest, older than the Heptarchy, older than Julius Cæsar. Looking from London Bridge, St. Olave Street turned off to the left toward Bermondsey. Nearly opposite the Tabard Inn, but close upon the shore of the Thames, stood the ancient church, almost a cathedral, of St. Mary Overy, or Over-the-rie (*i.e.* over the water), as it still stands. On both sides of the High Street were taverns or hostelries for travellers coming up to London, which were convenient not only for those who arrived too late at night to be admitted through the gates of the city, but for those who for some particular reason did not wish to subject themselves to the strictness of the municipal regulations of the city itself, with regard to the reception of strangers. Nobody was allowed in those days to walk the streets of London after nightfall without a light, and the gates were jealously kept by sergeants-at-arms, who lived in the rooms over the gateways, just as somebody might now live in the apartments over Temple Bar, or as people do actually live over the handsome Elizabethan gateway of the Water Company close to the windmill at Chislehurst. The sergeant-at-arms had to keep a strict watch at night, and in the day time it was to be kept by two armed men. The gate of London Bridge, among others, was sometimes let, just like a modern toll bar. And Mr. Riley calls special attention to the fact that

Geoffrey Chaucer is mentioned in the *Liber Albus*, book 4 G., as having had a lease of the gate at Aldgate: 'Dimissio Portæ de Algate facta Galfrido Chaucer, G. 321.' This is only by the way. The fact is, to return upon our track, the law of frankpledge, which ordained that no hotel-keeper should harbour a guest more than a day and night, unless he would make himself responsible to the authorities for any breaches of the peace that might be committed by his guest,* was enforced with great strictness in the city. There was evidently a feud between London and Southwark. It is probable, among other things, that the Southwarkers were 'chivied' or abused, or at all events looked down upon, by the Londoners for many reasons. For example, a certain form of social disorder had a licensed quarter devoted to it in Southwark; the reason assigned being that the domestic life of the citizens could not be made secure upon any other terms. And we can well conceive what a Londoner of the Middle Ages, proud of the chartered privileges of his capital, would have to say of Southwark being the *latrina* of London. The prejudice against Southwark extended to, among other things, its bread, and there are municipal regulations forbiding to regrate Southwark bread, or to bring it into the City, because neither the bakers of Southwark nor other places were amenable to the

* 'Item, que nulle receive estrange en sa mesoun outre in jour et un noet, sil ne viulle avoire prest destre a droit si avient qil tres pare.'—*Liber Albus.*

laws of the City:—'quia pistores de Suthwerke, nec aliunde, non sunt de justitiâ civitatis.' It is only necessary to suppose in addition, that the Southwark bakers, if vexed by the exclusion, often made their bread *better* than the London bread, to understand how much petty irritation of feeling might have existed upon such matters as these between the city and the suburb, and how glad travellers might have been to lodge themselves in the latter when they came up from the country. We all remember, I suppose, the picture of north-country hospitality in *Punch*. 'Who's that?' says one collier to another, referring to a well-dressed Southron over the way. 'Don't know,' says the other angrily. 'Then heave a brick at 'im!' says the first collier. The London 'prentices in those days were not permitted to heave bricks at strangers, but when we consider their numbers and their well-known manners, we can conceive that eccentric persons, poor Lackpennys, and the like, might prefer the borough to the city proper.

II. To the subject of locomotion apply the remarks which I have made in other relations, to the effect that the difference between our ancestors and ourselves is not so great as upon the surface appears. Relatively to their wants, their means of communication were good. Railways they had none, but their roads were well kept. Telegraphs they had none, but they had beacons, and a bonfire on a hill can be seen for a long

way. The habit of pilgrimage and the spirit of adventure both contributed to make travelling a common thing, and mankind are in no age slow to make frequent things easy things. Professor Thorold Rogers has produced abundant proof that the estates of the same feudal lord were often widely scattered, so that communication must have been frequent, if they were to be kept in order. And nobody can read ever so casually the records of the middle ages without being struck with the manner in which, to use a colloquialism, people *went about.* The household account of the Prince Lionel, of which Mr. E. A. Bond discovered the fragments, is curiously in point; and in another place the reader will find some notices of the almost restless progresses of the household. It will have been discerned that Robert Aldman, the Cuxham bailiff, made the journey from Cuxham to London—a distance of more than forty miles—in one day.

The map, of which a small segment is engraved at the head of this chapter, is a very curious one. Belonging to the reign of Edward III., it was on two skins of vellum. The names of London and York were written in large gold letters. The places of minor importance are indicated by single houses, larger places by churches and castles. The roads are indicated by lines, the miles of the different stages being marked; and it is impossible not to fancy, glancing at this itinerary, that there must have been much intercommunication between different parts of the island in the time of Chaucer,

from which the map is believed to date. It is obvious to say that men cannot walk and horses cannot gallop as fast as railway trains can go; but the English were always a travelling people. Comparatively speaking, the coasting trade was larger, perhaps, than it is now. The frequency of fast days made necessary a large fishing trade, and the Londoners had seaborne coal in the days of the Plantagenets, however little the general reader may expect to hear of such a thing. Of the general appearance of the country, and the point of view from which even a geographer thought of it, the map furnishes abundant evidence. It is one mass of churches and castles. Add to these the seventy forests, and the heron-haunted marshes, with monasteries everywhere, and the sea-margins somewhat different, nearly all round the island,—and some of the leading points of variation between the England of Victoria and the England of Chaucer will be realised. As to the changes in the sea-margins, examples are familiar to most of us. I believe the church of the Reculvers is now less than a mile from the cliffs—it used to be seven—and I have spoken to sailors who have known it two. I know, personally, of a case in which a gentleman, living on the east coast of England, bought some fields, arable and pasture, and lost them before he died, by the encroachments of the sea—that is to say, within about twenty years. It is not necessary to invoke the traditions of sailors who profess—as, for example, at Walton-on-the-Naze—to be able to see underneath the water, at

times, the spire of the church of a village submerged. How much the surface of the land must have changed is a subject beyond me; but we can all conceive something of it. The forests are gone; the boars and wolves are gone; the herons and marshes are gone; castles are gone, or are in decay; monasteries are gone, and abbeys are in ruins, or crumbling away; a bridge like that at Croyland stands, or lately stood, chiefly to be wondered at; and the old road to Canterbury, across the little lock-bridge, and all down among the winding hedge-rows, till you came to Bob-up-and-down, is with difficulty traceable here and there upon the fair face of the county of Kent.

Of the London and Westminster of Chaucer's time, there is little which Chaucer, however forewarned, would recognise, if he were to return to the great cities. The Thames he would scarcely know, with its many bridges. The London Bridge of Peter Colechurch, with its crypt and fishpond in one of the piers, and the drawbridge arch, over which rushed the insurgent commons of England, under Wat Tyler, he would wholly miss. And John of Gaunt's London palace of the Savoy, which the insurgents burnt? Would he know Westminster Abbey? Not Henry VII.'s chapel, of course; nor Sir Christopher Wren's clumsy towers. Not St. Paul's, which, in his days, had a spire, the interior being, probably, a public walk for people like his Absolon and Nicholas to show off in. Not the streets; assuredly not the Strand,

which, in the days of the Plantagenets, *was* a strand, sloping to the river, with only a house here and there. Not Cornhill, where the bowmen sold their bows and arrows. Not Eastcheap, which was a market for cooked food. He would know the Tower, however, and Lambeth Palace, perhaps, and St. Mary Overy's, where his contemporary, Gower, was married by William of Wykeham. And, as has been hinted, he would be at home at once in a place like Winchester School, over which still broods the spirit of the Middle Ages, though the boys no longer sleep on straw pallets, nor sweep out their own chambers, nor eat their meat without forks. How could he possibly recognise in the thronged streets of to-day, —even with the costermongers and the dealers in baked potatoes and whelks,—the London of William Lackpenny? Lackpenny says that, being disappointed of justice in Westminster Hall, 'he gat him out of the door'—

'Where Flemynges began on me for to cry,
"Master, what will you copen or buy?
Fyne felt hats, or spectacles to read?
Lay down your silver, and here you may speed."

Then to Westminster-gate I presently went,
When the sun was at hyghe prime;
Cooks to me they took good entent,
And proffered me bread, with ale and wine,
Ribs of beef, both fat and full fine.
A fair cloth they gan for to spread. . . . .

Then unto London I did me hie,
Of all the land it beareth the prize.
" Hot peascods ! " one began to cry,
" Strawberries ripe ! " and " Cherries in the rise ! "
And bad me come near, and buy some spice ;
Pepper and saffron they gan me bede. . . . . .

Then to the Chepe I began me drawn,
Where much people I saw for to stand :
One offered me velvet, silk, and lawn,
Another he taketh me by the hand :
" Here is Paris thread, the finest in the land."

Then full I went by London Stone,
Throughout all Canwyke Street;
Drapers much cloth offered me anon ;
Then comes me one cried, " Hot sheep's feet ; "
One cried mackerel ; ryster green, another gan greet;
One bade me a hood to cover my head. . . . .

Then I hied me unto East-chepe ;
One cries ribs of beef, and many a pie ;
Pewter pots they clattered on a heap ;
There was harp, pipe, minstrelsy.
" Yea, by cock!" " *Nay, by cock!" some began cry.*

Then into Cornhill anon I yode,
Where was much *stolen gear among* ;
I saw where hung mine owne hood,
That I had lost among the throng;
To buy my own hood I thought it wrong. . . .

The taverner took me by the sleeve,
" Sir," saith she, " will you our wine assay ? "
I answered, that cannot much me grieve,
A penny can do more than it may ;
I drank a pint, and for it did pay.

The absence of any such distinctly noticeable element as that of the Flanders traders, in this now cosmopolitan city, and the still more striking absence of a large traffic in cooked food carried on in the open street, would count for much; but for how much more the absence of gardens and trees, and a country prospect, looking onward, through the clear, unsmoky distance, to green, windy Kent!

III. And thus London, in its early days, considered as a city of open spaces, obstinately reappears! In Chaucer's days Smithfield was really a field. Morefields, which in the time of Fitzstephen, could be naturally and properly described as 'the great fen, or moor, which watereth the walls on the north side,' and a sliding-ground for the young men in winter, was, in the time of Chaucer, mere waste land, probably let as pasturage. 'But,' says Stowe, 'in the year 1415, the third of Henry V., Thomas Fawconer, Mayor, caused the wall of the city to be broken towards the said moor, and built the postern, called Moorgate, for the ease of the citizens to walk that way on causeways towards Iseldon and Hoxton. Moreover, he caused the ditches of the City, and other ditches, from Soer ditch to Deepe ditch by Bethelem, into the Moreditch, to be new cast and cleansed: by means thereof the said fen or moor was greatly drained and dried.' Scarcely anything gives one so vivid an idea of what some country folks would call

the 'unked' condition of London in those old times as the frequency which which the chroniclers talk about the ditches. I remember, when I was about two years old, the Fleet ditch, uncovered, running black and rapid in Bagniggewells Road; this and the little flint-built White Conduit House being my very earliest recollections of London. We know what a very unpleasant thing a ditch may be in the country, and can guess what it must have been in the neighbourhood of a great city. In some things our ancestors (as we have seen) placed excessive confidence—in ditches as fortifications, in oaths, and in spiced rubbish, such as hypocras, for keeping them in order. It is difficult for a modern Englishman, looking at the Tower moat, to think that it could ever have been of much use as a defence; and it is just as difficult to understand how a man could ever expect he could, in Chaucer's phrase,

'Keep his hede from all disease,'

by drinking caudle or spiced "claré."' But after all, it is equally difficult to understand how the ladies who must have been the types floating in Shakespeare's mind when he drew his Imogen, Olivia, Viola, Rosalind, Celia, Juliet, and Desdemona, (for wherever he got his stories from, the basis of his notion of a woman must have been English) could ever have enjoyed porpoises and peacocks. It is not worth while to be at any pains to describe the probable emotions of a modern artist in professed cookery, on being told

by his mistress or master, to include in a dinner a porpoise, a peacock, and a tansy pudding,—and this is an unpardonable digression.

IV. The very great frequency with which the county of Kent is referred to in the literature of the period, cannot escape the eye of any attentive reader. I foresee that some 'good fellow,' who thinks a great deal of English beer, will be ready to say that this is because Kent was the hop-producing county; but this will not do, for it seems that in the fourteenth century the beer of England was not hopped. The true reason is, no doubt, that Kent lay near the capital, with an access to it by two rivers, and a seaboard lying conveniently for commerce with Flanders. Stowe says of London, 'It maintaineth in flourishing estate the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Kent, and Sussex, which, as they lie in the face of our most puissant neighbour, so ought they above others to be conserved in the greatest strength and riches; and these, as is well known, stand, not so much by the benefit of their own soil, as by the neighbourhood and nearness which they have to London.' Communication with Kent would naturally be very frequent by water, and the accident of the shrine of St. Thomas at Canterbury being in the county made it much frequented. We know Chaucer says that in the spring men and women went 'specially from every shire's end in England to holy Canterbury;' and probably, whatever we may

read of the splendour of the shrine, we underrate rather than overrate the force of such language as this. No doubt the shrine was *courue*,—a popular or people's shrine, as the newspapers would now call it. It was a fine thing to have a saint of such importance so near a great capital. People were glad of a trip, and, may we take the Canterbury pilgrims for types? —the Miller was pale with drink, the Cook was so drunk that he could not speak and fell off his horse, and the Wife of Bath entertained the company by turning her fivefold conjugal story inside out for their amusement, in language which in our days is not quotable. The excitement of a little penance, a mild flogging, or a little dust-licking at the other end, we may suppose the pilgrims liked rather than otherwise. Thus there was a powerful inducement to go to Canterbury; people saw the world, and they got absolution at their journey's end; so that there was a constant stream of Londoners and others pouring into the great cathedral city. This must have kept the county well alive, for the pilgrims would of course have been news-bearers to and fro. All these circumstances, with no doubt many others, acting upon the old character of the Kentish men, (who had, as we all know, opposed the boldest front of any county of England to the Norman conquerors) must have contributed to keep that county the most free and public-spirited in the realm. The consciousness of what the Kentish men had formerly done in successfully maintaining their ancient

liberties, perpetually kept in their remembrance as it was by gavel-kind tenure and other circumstances, must have helped much to maintain alive the ancient character of the county. Accordingly we find it was evidently the revolutionary or radical county of the England of Chaucer. If the outrage offered by the tax-gatherer to the girl at Dartford had been offered to a girl in any other county in England, it is possible enough that the insurrection would not have broken out; just because a Wat Tyler would have been wanting to apply the spark to the pile which was ready to flame.

In our own day the circumstances have wonderfully changed. Nothing can rob the Kentish men of their old fame, of the benefits of their seaboard river communication, of their proximity to the capital; but if a popular rising were now to be expected, we should not look to Kent for the beginnings of it. We should turn our eyes northward, to Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, and Sheffield, where radical or insurgent opinion is always rife in the crowded populations which have gathered since we became a great manufacturing country. The discovery of America, and the conquest of India, and the colonization of Australia, have been the chief agents in bringing about these changes. The shipping tonnage at Liverpool is, we all know, something enormous; its facilities as a port of exit for America act like a magnet in drawing the activity of the country in a westerly direction. I do not doubt the loyalty of Liverpool, and I believe that as a muni-

cipality it is far ahead of any other English town; but it is the most Americanized place in England, and I sometimes think of it with a sense of uneasiness, not as to anything Liverpool may do, but as to what may come through her. It may seem an idle thing in these railway and newspaper days to talk of 'North' and 'South' in this little island; but I am very much mistaken if there is not a widening gulf between the English north of the Trent and the English south of the Trent. This is by the way.

And what is it to the state of things which existed between the north and the south of the Tweed in Chaucer's time? In the extreme north of England, the uncertainty of our relations with Scotland, and the danger of living anywhere on the border-land, are illustrated quite sufficiently by the aspect of Newcastle-on-Tyne in the fourteenth century. The story goes that the Scotch, in one of their customary raids, carried off an English merchant, and that after he was ransomed, he devoted some of his money to the rebuilding of the fortifications of the town. The new wall was twelve feet high and eight feet thick, and there was a moat nearly seventy feet broad on the outside. The gates of the town were seven in number, and the wall had seventeen keeps or round towers, besides watch-towers. As late as the reign of Edward IV., it is said that a hundred of the citizens, armed, kept watch upon the wall every night!

V. I have already said something of the nearness, both in fact and feeling, of our forefathers and foremothers to the land, and the solid earth, green with grass, beautiful with trees, fruitful with wheat, embroidered with flowers, and belted with the silver of running rivers. But, though in this subject it does not matter at which end we take it up, one might also say that the land was as near to men and women as they to the land in those early times. From the growth of manufactures, the tendency of all value to get itself represented in money, and the increased use of *credit*, (by whatever symbols represented, but mainly in symbols of increasing abstractness) we have got to think of land scarcely at all except as a source of income to some who have what we call a 'title' to it. And it is notoriously accumulated in a very few hands. From modern freedom with all its drawbacks to the ancient feudalism with all its drawbacks, would be a poor exchange; but when we think of the old feudal ceremony of enfeoffment or livery of seisin, in which possession of the land delivered from the feudal lord to his feudatory, was conveyed by handing over a clod or solid piece of earth, (I do not know how large, perhaps as large as the conventional 'first sod' of a new railway, or the bit of turf one puts in a skylark's cage,) we are helped to realize how strictly personal once was the relation of the landholder to the land. Is it true that when William the Conqueror, of whom we are accustomed to think as the founder of the feudal

system in England, landed at Hastings, he fell forward on his nose, clutching up as he fell a piece of the beach, or a lump of shingle, and that though some of his chiefs regarded this as an evil omen, William the Norman, with the true instinct of a feudal warrior, said that, on the contrary, it was an excellent omen, for he had thus taken possession of the country he had come to conquer?

In these early times almost all trade addressed itself to the wants of the farmer, the priest, or the soldier; an immense amount of subordinate mechanical industry, gathering itself around the cultivation of the land,—the land from which came the bread, and on which the cattle grew. It is scarcely possible to conceive the affectionate interest which our forefathers, passing the winter in gloomy castles or smoky houses, must have taken in the Earth of spring, summer, and autumn,—fresh, green, sweet, and hospitable. And this point may well be remembered when we attempt to realize the naturalness of the feudal system in a world of soldiers, farmers, priests, and women. We must bear in mind, too, that the surface of the earth in Europe was, in those days, perpetually in need of reclamation. There were hundreds upon hundreds of miles of marsh to drain, forest to clear, and dry soil to irrigate. I believe I am right in saying that from the eleventh to the fourteenth century there were seventy immense forests in England, to say nothing of the marshland of, for instance, the midland and mid-eastern counties. Now we all know the saying, 'Give a

man a rock for his own, and he will cultivate it into a garden,' and we can well understand that if a wily abbot, say of Evesham, went to the king, and told him that a shepherd had dreamed that the Virgin Mary had appeared to him, and told him that it would be good to build an abbey on the banks of the Avon, a superstitious and politic monarch would not be slow to make the churchman a grant of territory for him to clear, to build on, and do what he liked with. Say what you will, the actual military lord of the soil could never have felt that he was really parting with any portion of it, even to the Church, and he must have known perfectly well that in such a case he was only allowing the abbot to set up a fresh centre of cultivation, around which would gather a population and a trade, to the great increase of the value of the soil. On the whole, when possession of land began in hand-to-hand conquest, and was passed on from hand to hand by a process avowedly deriving from conquest, in each case the tangible, visible surface of the solid earth being changed by the hand of the new master—monasteries for marshes, and busy walled cities for brushwood—people must have felt very differently towards the earth on which they lived from what they do now. Sheffield is still a place for cutlery, as it was in Chaucer's days, and it is said that near Margate portions of the jetty for landing foreign pilgrims for Canterbury are still traceable; but compare a section of Bradshaw's map of England with the section at the head of this chapter!

CONCLUSION.

In dealing with the life of Chaucer himself, I stated that the reader would find in another place a quotation or two from the 'Testament of Love,' attributed to the poet, from which he might form his own opinion upon the question, whether Chaucer's imprisonment, desertion by his friends, residence in Zetland, and all the associated topics upon which so much comment has been founded, were things that had any biographical reality in them. But my space has slipped away so fast (and indeed it has quite recently been questioned whether this 'Testament of Love' was written by Chaucer!) that I omit the intended extracts, and use for other purposes the space they would have occupied.

If the plan of this book had been different, my own taste and my own notion of what ought to be interesting, would have led me to compose it entirely of extracts, with a very few brief explanatory comments. A mandate from Edward III. commanding the people of Harwich to furnish so many bows and arrows for the king's wars by a given time; a mandate from Richard II. 'de arte sagittandi per valettos regis exercenda,' appointing a particular person to train the

said 'valets' of the royal household, wherever they might be, in archery; a writ of Edward III. addressed to Chaucer as a custom-house officer, in which the word 'cocket'—familiar enough in docks and bonded warehouses to this day—occurs under date of the year 1374; a mandate from Richard II. about the wild beasts in the Tower; another commanding Thomas, Earl of Kent, Constable of that place, to receive and hold in safe custody twenty prisoners captured at sea by Richard, Earl of Arundel, 'vigenti prisonarios nostros, supra mare per carissimum consanguineum nostrum, Ricardum, Comitem Arundellæ, Admirallum Angliæ,'—little documents like these, taken from Rymer's *Fœdera*, are, to my mind, more suggestive than whole volumes of comment and description.

One of the things that I will venture to put in the space that the above-named omission affords us, is a fuller reference to the vow of what was called chastity (*i. e.* celibacy) occasionally taken by widows, when the mediæval Church had its own way. Stowe mentions that John Godnay, draper, who had been mayor of London in 1427, had 'wedded the widow of Robert Large, late mayor, which widow had taken the mantle and ring, and the vow to live chaste to God during the term of her life, for the breach whereof, the marriage done, they were troubled by the Church, and put to penance, both he and she.' In a foot-note by Mr. Thomas, of the Camden Society, I find the following translation of a document of the time:—

'13th March, 1393, Lady Blanch, relict of Sir Nicholas de Steyvecle, knight, alleging that she was a parishioner of John Lord Bishop of Ely, humbly supplicated the said bishop, that he would think worthy to accept her vow of chastity, and from consideration of regard confer upon her the mantle and ring, &c.; and afterwards the said Lady Blanch, in the chapel of the manor of Dodyngton, in the diocese of Ely, before the high altar, in the presence of the said reverend father, then and there solemnly celebrating mass, made solemnly her vows of chastity, as follows, in these words: "I, Blanch, heretofore wife to Sir Nicholas de Steyvecle, knight, vow to God, and our holy Lady Saint Mary, and all saints, in presence of our Reverend Father in God, John, by the grace of God, Bishop of Ely, that I will be chaste from henceforth during my life." And the said reverend father received her vow, and solemnly consecrated and put upon the said vowess the mantle and ring in the presence of, &c.'

On another of the topics which arose in the course of my task, I have found incidentally some light. In *Notes and Queries*, a letter signed 'G. R. C.,' and referring with acknowledgments to a Mr. W. Durant Cooper, mentions the fact that a Harry Baily, or Bailly, hostelry-keeper of Southwark, represented that borough in Parliament in the reign of King Edward III., and in that of Richard II.

The reader will remember that Sir Harris Nicolas had expressed a doubt as to Chaucer's having read

Italian, and inferentially therefore Dante, and that I took some trouble in the first volume to argue the contrary, besides giving two or three instances of quotation by Chaucer from the poet of Florence. I might have spared my argument, and multiplied my instances. But until it happened that Mr. Longfellow's translations came under my eye lately in the course of business my knowledge of Dante was confined to the original, and only to a limited portion of that. Indeed I was always shy of reading Dante, for a reason which I should scarcely have the courage to mention if it were not that while I am writing these lines I observe that, in criticising Gustave Doré in the *British Quarterly Review*, a writer, evidently competent, affirms, while he is a sincere admirer of Doré, that "Doré, by his intense sympathy with Dante, has done more to sink that author from his shadowy eminence than has been effected by three centuries of critics, commentators, and enthusiastic admirers, because the mean, mechanical . . . . horrors which are interwoven in the antique and sonorous cadence of the *terza rima*, are brought out in repulsive detail by the pencil of the illustrator." Be this as it may.

I had been repelled by the *meanness* and filth of Dante (he seems to me to be filthy even for the thirteenth century, and even in his love he is occasionally mean), had always opened him with reluctance, and was too often apt to lay him down with a feeling of disgust; so that I had not vividly before me

the reiterated proofs afforded by parallel passages that Chaucer intimately knew him. *Some* hints of such proofs I have given, as the reader remembers, along with the reasons for believing that Chaucer understood Italian. But there is no part of my task in which I have not felt that I was not treading on sand,—so many have seemed to me the possibilities of the case, where much abler commentators have spoken with confidence. Where they exhibit parallel passages as affiliated to a specific origin, something constantly occurs to suggest that there was no such origin; but that the thing was either a mediæval common-place, for the beginning of which you might run in vain after a hundred will-o'-the-wisps of quotation, or a common-place founded on universal instinctive suggestion. Turning to Cary, I find, Canto I., 'Paradise,' the following lines:—

> 'And suddenly upon the day appear'd
> A day new-risen; as he, who hath the power,
> Had with another sun bedeck'd the sky.'

To which is appended a quotation from Chaucer's 'Book of Fame'—

> '—— If the heaven had ywonne
> All new of God another sunne,'

with passages from Milton, Ariosto, and others. When Hannah More first became acquainted with Words-

worth's poetry, she said it seemed to her as if a new sun had arisen on midday. It may have been a reminiscence of Milton, but the figure is a natural one, likely to occur to any one. Besides difficulties of this kind (to which I have before referred) there is the slipperiness, the uncertainty, and promiscuousness of the mediæval wit. You fancy you have got hold of a fine original touch, and then, a little while afterward, the fine original touch resolves itself into a mere echo, of which it is almost impossible to determine the origin. Here is a case in which Chaucer, writing with Boccaccio for a model and more than a model, paraphrases a speech which is well known in Dante and elsewhere, down to 'Locksley Hall,'—

> 'For, of fortunes scharp adversite,
> The werst kynde of infortune is this,
> A man to have be in prosperite,
> And it remember, whan it passid is.'

Now is this a mediæval commonplace, or did Dante originate it? It may very well be a mere inversion of a familiar *classic* commonplace, but really is it worth while to try and settle such questions? The only sentiment that meets the difficulty is—in Chaucer's own words—

> 'For my words here, and every parte,
> I speke hem alle under correccion.'

One thing, however, is certain—that Chaucer was intimately acquainted with Dante; that he sometimes mentions him by name in quoting him; and, besides, often paraphrases him without mentioning him by name. It is this kind of thing, perpetually recurring as it does, which makes one's path in criticising the literature of the time so briary, and it is not worth the labour of a lifetime to go hunting among old manuscripts to *try* and find out who first invented an idea which appears to be in universal favour. However, it remains true that Chaucer had probably read Dante in the original; though it is just *possible* that his acquaintance with him was only fragmentary, and gathered from French sources.

While I am on these literary matters, it is in place to observe that I have as yet been able to read none of the latest writers on Chaucer,—not Mr. William Morris, for example, nor Mr. Henry Morley, the pleasure awaits me—but that since part of these volumes were in type I have looked into what Leigh Hunt has to say about his wit and humour, and that if I had seen it before, one of his comments would have been introduced among my own upon the poet's versification. I refer to the shrewd remark that Chaucer is curiously accurate in introducing lines of Latin into his poetry. It certainly seems to afford a presumption that whenever his lines do not scan it is not his fault; but that of a change of usage in pronunciation, or quite as often of the errors of copyists. This is

a matter in which I happen to have peculiar experience, and I affirm that no care whatever in superintending copyists and writers from dictation will secure manuscripts from error. I have not a doubt that there is an enormous amount of copyists' errors in Chaucer. There are some in Milton, in spite of his well-known scrupulosity in correcting the press.

Having glided once more into this very pleasant track of literary comment, I cannot forbear introducing an instance or two more of Chaucer's truthful observation of Nature and his minuteness of detail in descriptive passages; and the rather because some of my readers may fancy, from what I have already glanced at in these pages, that I overrate the force of the purely conventional or imitative, quasi-Provençal element in Chaucer. I think I do not; but confess I cannot copy the confident admiration of some critics who are nevertheless better entitled to be confident than I am. However, here is a touch of nature which all the world have united in admiring:—

> 'And as the newe abasched nightyngale,
> That stynteth firste, whanne sche begynneth singe,
> Whanne that sche heereth any heerdis tale,
> Or in [the] heggis any wight steringe;
> And, aftir, siker doth her vois out ring;
> Right so Cryseide, whanne hir drede stint,
> Opened hir herte, and tolde him hir entent.'

Here is another felicitous simile, and a thoroughly English one too:—

'But right as when the sunne shynith bright
In Marche that chaungith oft tyme his face,
And that a cloud is putte with wynde to flight,
The which oversprat the sunne, as for a space,
A clowdy thoght gan thurgh her herte pace,
That oversprad her othir thoughtis alle,
So that for fere almost she gan to falle.
That thoght was this ———'

In this instance I have left more words standing than are necessary, in order to have the pleasure, with the reader, of tasting Chaucer's naturalness of manner. One more quotation:—

'For thilke grund that berith the wedis wyk,
Berith eke thes holsom herbis, and ful oft
Next the foule nettle, rogho and thik,
The lilie wexith, white, smoothe, and soft;
And next the valey is the hil a loft,
And next the derk night the glad morow,
And also joy is next the fine of sorow.'

I must be pardoned for adding that, among the common people and children, you may still hear "wick" for wicked. One single phrase of Chaucer's, in 'The Flower and the Leaf,' is worth quoting, if only for the purpose of showing those who are deterred by the uncouth look of his page, at first sight, that they will often find themselves at home with him in a single instant:—

'At the last, out of a grove even by,
That was right goodly and pleasaunt to sight,

I sie where there came, singing lustily,
A world of ladies; but, to telle aright
Their grete beauty, it lieth not in my might,
Ne their array; neverthelesse I shalle
Telle you a part, though I speake not of alle.'

Let me be forgiven for copying one instance of minuteness of description, which will show, if the showing were necessary, that a garden in the fourteenth century was very much like a garden in the nineteenth:—

'Adoune the staire anon right tho she went
Into a gardyn ther with her necis thre,
And up and doun they madyn meny a went.
. . . . .
And other of her wymmen, a grete rout,
Her followdyn in the gardyn al about.

'This yerd was large, and *raylyd the aleyes*,
And shadowyd wele with blosmy bowis grene,
And *benchyed newe* and *sandyd alle the weyes*,
In which she walkith arme and armè betwene.'

With this, we will take leave of Chaucer himself, considered as the poet of his time; and come back for a few lines more to his England. Not aspiring, as I have sufficiently shown, to the dignity of the historian or historical critic, I have yet not omitted all reference to the imperial events of one of the most stirring centuries in the history of England; such as the insurrections of the peasantry, and the Black Death, both

of which are referred to, as we have seen, by the poet, though in the most casual manner. The reference to the noise made by 'Jack Straw and his men,' which occurs in the Nonne Preste's Tale (see p. 11, vol. ii.), is almost trivial as well as casual. His other references to the more alarming or thrilling events of the century are humorous more than serious. Yet he lived in awful times: drought, whirlwind, earthquake, war with the Scots, war with France (in which he himself had taken part), represented in our history chiefly by the names Crecy and Poictiers, and, added to these, pestilences of the most devastating character, with insurrections of the labouring classes that were charged with the most vital omens for the future of England. Familiar to many of us is the following passage in Stowe, and never forgotten, I should say, when they pass the Charter House, by those who have once read the words:—

'And without the bar of West Smithfield lieth a large street or way, called of the house of St. John, there St. John's street, and stretcheth toward Iseldon, on the right hand whereof stood the late dissolved monastery called the Charterhouse, founded by Sir Walter Manny, knight, a stranger lord, lord of the town of Manny, in the diocese of Cambrey, beyond the seas, who for service done to King Edward III. was made knight of the garter: so his house he founded upon this occasion. A great pestilence entering this island, began first in Dorsetshire, then proceeded into Devonshire, Somersetshire, Gloucestershire, and Oxfordshire, and at length came to London, and overspread all England,

so wasting the people, that scarce the tenth person of all sorts was left alive, and churchyards were not sufficient to receive the dead, but men were forced to choose out certain fields for burials; whereupon Ralph Stratford, bishop of London, in the year 1348, bought a piece of ground called No Man's Land, which he inclosed with a wall of brick, and dedicated for the burial of the dead, building thereupon a proper chapel, which is now enlarged and made a dwelling-house; and this burying plot is become a fair garden, retaining the old name of Pardon churchyard.

'About this, in the year 1349, the said Sir Walter Manny, in respect of danger that might befall in this time of so great a plague and infection, purchased thirteen acres and a rod of ground adjoining to the said No Man's Land, and lying in a place called Spittle cross, because it belonged to St. Bartilmewe's hospital, since that called the New Church haw, and caused it to be consecrated by the said bishop of London to the use of burials.

'In this plot of ground there were in that year more than fifty thousand persons buried, as I have read in the charters of Edward III.: also, I have seen and read an inscription fixed on a stone cross, sometime standing in the same churchyard, and having these words:—'*Anno Domini* 1349, *regnante magna pestilentia consecratum fuit hoc Cœmiterium, in quo et infra septa presentis monasterii, sepulta fuerunt mortuorum corpora plusquam quinquaginta millia, præter alia multa abhinc usque ad presens, quorum animabus propitietur Deus. Amen.*'

These tremendous round figures may be exaggerated, like those which give us the 30,000 scholars at Oxford, but I have produced a passage from Chaucer which is sufficiently expressive, very brief as it is, of the awfully depopulating effects of the plague. For a view of its results in raising the value of labour of

every kind, and practically destroying in England the last shreds of feudalism, I must refer the reader to two gentlemen who long ago took possession of the topic to such purpose that I should have no right to dwell upon it, unless I could make serious additions to what they have said. I mean, of course, Mr. F. Seebohm and Professor Thorold Rogers. In the *Fortnightly Review* for September, and (I think) October 1865, the discussion was opened, and Mr. Rogers has, of course, not forgotten the topic in the his 'History of Prices.' It will be remembered that the general conclusion of Mr. Seebohm was that the population of this island was, before the time of the Black Death, very much larger than has usually been supposed. I must not omit to add a reference to Hallam's 'Middle Ages,' vol. iii., chap. ix. part II., but the discussion about the comparative well-being, chiefly as to the food they could get, of the labouring class in Chaucer's time, and the same class in our own time, could not be made interesting without much more frank extract than perhaps some readers would think regular. Otherwise I would gladly copy in this place the whole of *Passus Sixtus* of the Vision of Piers Ploughman, with its many curious touches as to the food of the agricultural classes in those days.

What, in glancing back over the age of Chaucer, the mind most frequently returns upon is the fact that so much of that with which we are now familiar and to which we are fanatically attached,—our Protestant-

ism, the privileges of the House of Commons, and its place as the chief power in the constitution, the responsibility and impeachableness of ministers,—were solidly prominent things, either agitated or realised, in this century. Then, the introduction of Bills of Exchange as an instrument of commerce may appear to be, but scarcely is, a less important matter than any of the others. To this must be added, the modifications of the language, and the use of English for, among many purposes, the law pleadings. I believe the use of the words 'plain English' (which occur in Chaucer), as a contrast to anything which is supposed to be obscurely expressed, dates from this century.

As we turn our eyes backwards upon the age of the great Englishman whose name is the link which binds together all those desultory words of mine (may his shade pardon them!) two figures, as we have seen, begin to pale in splendour and lessen in prominence,—the Knight and the Priest. That this means the death of natural chivalry and of natural faith, is an idea which commands none of my sympathy. The ideal Knight stood for valour, courtesy, and worth, as distinguished from mere wealth and social predominance; the ideal Priest stood between the oppressor and the oppressed, and represented (as far as his creed would let him) the universal shelter of the Divine love. Traditionally both still help us; but if, like other types, they have died out, it is not in vain they have died. Nothing that in its time was good perishes,

without blotting out some handwriting of ordinances that was against us, and bringing nigh some that were afar off. From the first century downwards it was the fashion for religiously-minded malcontents to prophesy the approaching end of the world. Wickliffe prophesied that it would end before the clock struck for the first hour of the next century. Five hundred years since then are nearly completed, and though

'The spirit walks of every day deceased,'

and one would not be rude even to the ghost of mediæval Chivalry and the ghost of mediæval Faith,—and we certainly ought not to neglect their warnings,—it is clear that the end is not yet, and that our duty still lies along the path of endless change. We have had in England more sudden and decisive revolutions than we of the present generation have seen; and yet the word Change is written in larger and more varied characters upon this century than upon any that has been since the Canterbury Tales were conceived. Chaucer was neither saint nor hero, and we may conceive that in all things *pas trop de zèle* was his motto, but can any human being doubt upon which side he would be found if he were now living amongst us?

THE END.

LONDON:
STRANGEWAYS AND WALDEN, PRINTERS,
Castle St., Leicester Sq.

00036242

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 26 June, 2018